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Cover Picture:

Rejoicings at Fatehpur Sikri on the birth of Prince Murad, 1570 A. D.  
[Acc. No. 80/117, Victoria and Albert Museum.]

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## Music and Musical Instruments in the Paintings of the *Akbar Nama*

Geeti Sen

From contemporary sources of the time it is evident that music played an essential part in Mughal court life. A rich source of information here is the *A'in-i-Akbari*, written by Abu'l Fazl, wherein the court biographer has pioneered a new kind of documentation. As a sequel to his historical chronicle of the *Akbar Nama*, the *A'in* describes the etiquette and ranks at the court, the regal ensigns of royalty, details of the arsenal, onwards down to the stables.<sup>1</sup> He also devotes a section of *A'in* 19 to musical instruments, which thus form an integral part of the ensigns of royalty.<sup>2</sup>

In this chapter, Abu'l Fazl describes, in considerable detail, the hours of performance at the *naqqarakhana*, or the music gallery. This would stress the heraldic purpose of music, to indicate the ritual progression of time through the hours of a day. He commences his commentary thus:

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"Formerly the band played four *ghari-s* before the commencement of the night, and likewise, four *ghari-s* before daybreak. Now they play first at midnight when the sun commences his ascent, and the second time at dawn. One *ghari* before sunrise, the musicians commence to blow the *surna*, and wake up those that are asleep; and one *ghari* before sunrise they play a short prelude, when they beat the *kuwarga* a little, whereupon they play upon the *karna*, the *nafir* and other instruments, without however making use of the *naqqara*... After a little pause, the *surna-s* are blown again, the time of the music being indicated by the *nafir-s*. One hour later, the *naqqara-s* commence when all musicians raise the auspicious strain..."

The passage above suggests that this music of the *naqqarakhana* performed a ritualistic role, and was considered as such by the court historian. He describes and classifies the instruments used:

"Of musical instruments used in the *naqqarakhana* I may mention:

1. The *kuwarga*, commonly called *damama*; there are eighteen pairs of them, more or less, and they give a deep sound;
2. The *naqqara*, twenty pairs, more or less;
3. The *duhul*, of which four are used;
4. The *karna*, made of gold, silver, brass and other metals, and they never blow fewer than four;
5. The *surna*, of the Persian, and Indian kinds, they blow nine together;
6. The *nafir*, of the Persian, European, and Indian kinds, they blow some of each kind;
7. The *sing* is of brass, and made in the form of a cow's horn; they blow two together;
8. The *sanj* or cymbal, of which three pairs are used."

It may be noted here that these instruments are different from those used by the vocalists for accompaniment, which have also been listed in the *A'in-i-Akbari*. These include the *sarmandal*, the flute, the *tambura*, the *rubab*, the *qichak* and the *surna*.<sup>3</sup> One may presume that these musical performances tended towards a greater degree of improvisation than was permitted in the *naqqarakhana*. However, pictorial representation of these *ustad-s* or singers is rare in compositions of the sixteenth century.

The passages quoted above would serve only to precipitate the reader's interest in music. An additional source of information to the reader, and one that is relatively unexplored for musical instruments, are the paintings of the *Akbar Nama*.<sup>4</sup> These paintings, which were commissioned from the leading painters of the imperial studio, provide a visual complement to the written narrative of the court chronicle. It is significant for our purposes to note here that they were painted within the same decade of the 1590's in which the *Akbar Nama* was researched and written by Abu'l Fazl. They thus become a contemporary 'reading' and recording of events, through the eyes of painters who on certain occasions may have been eye-witnesses to these events.

These paintings have been acknowledged in every monograph on Mughal painting, in terms of their superb quality. That apart, they provide a good deal of information about the day and the age, about customs at the court and etiquette. The details of music and of musicians which appear in these paintings in an anecdotal fashion are proved to be authentic, by the very fact that several compositions repeat the same details. Among the one hundred and sixteen paintings preserved today at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, nine compositions provide details on the nature of music and of musical instruments used at Akbar's court. These are listed below with the subject of reference being usually a *darbar*, a marriage or a birth celebration.

1. Acc. No. 7/117: Akbar receives the child Abdu'r Rahim at the court, Agra, in 1561 A.D.
2. & 3. Acc. Nos. 8 and 9/117: Musical entertainment at the marriage of Baqi Muhammed Khan, in 1561 A.D.
4. Acc. No. 16/117: Dancing girls taken from Baz Bahadur's court at Mandu to perform before Akbar.
5. Acc. No. 33/117: The attempt to assassinate Akbar at Delhi in 1563 A.D.
6. Acc. No. 78/117: Rejoicings on the birth of Prince Salim at Fatehpur Sikri, 1569 A.D.
7. Acc. No. 79/117: Akbar receives the news of Salim's birth at Agra and festivities.
8. Acc. No. 80/117: Rejoicings at Fatehpur Sikri on the birth of Prince Murad, 1570 A.D.
9. Acc. No. 113/117: Husain Quli Khan pays his respects to Akbar in 1573 A.D.

A few of these illustrations confirm the fact that the *naqqarakhana* was intended to refer to a musicians' gallery, assigned to a specific place in Mughal architecture. In the dramatic composition of the attempt to assassinate Akbar as he passed through Delhi (33/117), the musicians appear above the entrance gateway to the city. They play vigorously upon the drums (*naqqara-s*) and trumpets (*surna-s*) to announce the immediate arrival of the emperor and of the royal cavalcade. The instruments used here include two pairs of *naqqara-s* (drums), a pair of *sanj* or flat cymbals, the curved trumpet or *surna*, the short trumpet or *nafir*, two straight and long trumpets (*surna-s*), as well as the curved horn trumpet of the *sing*, which appears rarely in these paintings.

Other illustrations would suggest that these same instruments of royalty were carried into the battlefield, to sound the battle-cry with the large kettle drums (*naqqara-s*) strapped across the backs of camels, and with the flamboyant curved necks of the trumpets (*surna-s*) glinting in the sun. When the imperial forces advanced, with the elephants, arrayed in battle armour, the sight and resonance of these huge drums were intended to inspire the ranks of the enemy with terror (Acc. No. 63/117). The capture of enemy booty invariably included the prized capture of the insignias and war drums, which were brought and laid before the emperor or his representative (Acc. No. 41/117). It is not surprising that the same use of martial music, employing the same drums and trumpets, appears in Persian paint-



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ings of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. These illustrations would serve to confirm the origins of these musical instruments, and indeed of this genre of music, as derived from beyond the borders of India.

A third category of subjects introduce these musical instruments of the *naqqarakhana* in scenes of court festivity. Rites of births and marriage are invariably accompanied with a specific role assigned to the musicians of the *naqqarakhana*. In the scene of Baqi Muhammad Khan's marriage, the royal guests are shown entertained by musicians on a splendid double-page painting. These musicians are relegated to a separate dais at the far end of the courtyard, and are accompanied by the whirling dance of two ladies in the Turkish Chaghtai costume and head-dress (Acc. Nos. 8 and 9/117).

Again, the birth of the princes (*shaikhzade-s*) at Fatehpur Sikri is announced through music and dance. Descriptions of these events in sources such as the *Akbar Nama*, the *Tabaqat-i-Akbari* and the *Muntakhabu-t-Tawarikh* mention that they were celebrated with great feasts and revelry, by the casting of horoscopes and the release of prisoners,<sup>5</sup> but not much is made of the music performances. It becomes the contribution of the painters of these events (Acc. Nos. 78, 79 and 80/117) to have included these as an essential component of birth festivities. The same conclusion is drawn from the portrayal of other birth scenes, such as the birth of Timur and the birth of Akbar in the second set of the *Akbar Nama* illustrations, today at the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin (Ms. No. 3).

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The last of these subjects from the *Akbar Nama*, of the birth of Prince Murad (Acc. No. 80/117), affords the most animated recording on the occasion of the birth of a prince in the royal household. It is conceived by the artists Basawan and Bhurah, with different events happening simultaneously in different chambers. Even while the child is being nursed in the royal bed-chamber, astrologers prepare the horoscope, women rejoice with stringing up mango leaves, and musicians announce the joyous event. According to the description given by Abu'l Fazl in the *A'in*, two men beat upon a small pair of *naqqara* drums and a pair of giant drums of *damama*. Besides them, keeping the tempo, a young musician plays upon the *sanj* or cymbals. Three more men are depicted as playing upon the trumpets, which include the *surna* or the curved trumpet, the long trumpet, and the short trumpet or *karna*. The *sing* is not to be found here, although it does appear elsewhere, and also on the battlefield in certain illustrations. Accompanying the musicians, the male dancer performs a typical stance of *Kathak*, and attendants arrive with a cradle.

The birth of Akbar in the *Tarikh-i-Khandan-i-Timuriya* at the Bankipore Library (Patna) is presented in similar terms, with mango leaves strung along doorways, and royal musicians performing on drums and trumpets. The *Akbar Nama* at the British Museum (Or. 12988, folios 20b and 21a) opens with two pages, both composed by Sanwala, where the birth of Akbar is presented under identical circumstances. Musicians and astrologers appear before Humayun on the second page. When the same ceremonies are observed for the birth of Timur two centuries earlier in 1376 A.D. (Br. Mus. Or. 12988, folio 34b), then these would appear as anachronisms, referring specifically to customs of the sixteenth century. The repetition of the musicians authenticates, in a sense, their appearance at birth festivities during Akbar's reign.

It has been mentioned above that the appearance of the indigenous tradition of music is rare among illustrations of the *Akbar Nama*. However, two pages towards the beginning and the close of the present manuscript of illuminations introduce a vina player into the court or *darbar* scene (Acc. Nos. 7/117 and 113/117). Dark-skinned and attired suitably in a luminous white *jama*, his appearance is more as one of the great luminaries at the court, rather than as one of the performing musicians. He has been identified by certain authorities as Naubat Khan, who was the *Darogah* (Keeper) of the *naqqarakhana* in the 1590's, by comparison with a portrait of his, which appears elsewhere.<sup>6</sup> At any rate, his presence at a *darbar* is greatly significant since it confirms the importance attached at this time to the indigenous modes of music and of musical instruments.

Again, it must be stressed that these two traditions of music at the Mughal court seem to have been quite divergent during the reign of Akbar, and to have served specific and different purposes. This distribution is confirmed once more in a later painting which could be a celebration of the coronation of Emperor Jehangir. Today at the Rampur library, this animated composition includes the musicians of the *naqqarakhana*, all heroically astride horses, and flanking the elephants (*nishan ke hathi*). The description of this sumptuous page by Percy Brown comments on the two divergent traditions:

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"Flanking the elephants are two groups of mounted musicians, energetically blowing on their trumpets, *turhi* and *nafir*, or beating on the drum, *naqqara*...In the upper group, called *Kalavat* or *gavayya* which is a mixed assembly of Hindus and Muhammedans, two men will be observed with stringed instruments like large mandolins, known as *sarod*. The elder of these two performers has been identified as Tansen ...the younger performer is Shauqi, who afterwards took the place of Tansen, and of whom Jehangir writes that he is the wonder of the age and sings 'in a manner that clears the rust from all hearts'."<sup>7</sup>

A study of these paintings would suggest and stress the contribution of musical performances, during specific occasions. At the same time, the occasional appearance of a musician with a *vina*, or of the *Kathak* dancer, might suggest the indigenous tradition at the court. These details enliven the events of the court and enrich our appreciation of this period of the sixteenth century.

### References

1. Abu'l Fazl, *A'in-i-Akbari*, V. I, transl. Blochmann, and V. II transl. Jarrett.
2. Abu'l Fazl, *A'in-i-Akbari*, V. I, transl. Blochmann, pp. 52-54.
3. Abu'l Fazl, *op. cit.*
4. Victoria and Albert Museum No. I.S. 2/1896/117.
5. Abu'l Fazl, *Akbar Nama*, transl. Beveridge, II, p. 503.
6. See Pinder Wilson, ed., *Paintings at the Muslim Courts of India*, 1978.
7. Percy Brown, *Indian Paintings under the Mughals*, p. 130.

### Illustrations

1. The *Naqqarekhana* or music gallery in the scene of the attempt to assassinate Akbar at Delhi, 1563.
2. The royal musicians celebrating the birth of Prince Murad at Fatehpur Sikri, 1569.
3. The vina player. Perhaps a portrait of Naubat Khan, *Derogah* of the *Naqqarekhana*, in the scene where Hussain Quli Khan pays his respects to Akbar on his return from the Gujarat campaign, 1573.

## African Traditions of Folklore

J. H. Kwabena Nketia

It is now generally recognised that the culture of a society can be viewed not only as an organic whole, but also in terms of its internal structure as a composite of traditions some of which are generally shared, while others are restricted to particular categories of individuals, social groups or even social classes.

By tradition in this context, I mean any aspect of culture that is passed on from generation to generation. It could be a conceptual aspect of culture such as ideas, forms of knowledge, beliefs or values. Or it could be a behavioural aspect of culture such as a particular custom, a rite, a ceremony, or a way of doing things. It could be a tradition in the creative aspect of culture—a tradition in music, dance, drama, literature or visual art. Hence culture can be viewed as the sum total of traditions cultivated by a people.

The primary concern of folklore is with a specific set of cultural traditions in oral circulation, or modes of expression within this complex cultural whole which are practised or cultivated by a community as an aspect of its social life or by social groups as an aspect of their particular way of life. These traditions include symbolic forms of knowledge, beliefs, customs, ceremonies which define individual and social behaviour, but which are shared by groups or a community as a whole. There are also traditions in the creative fields that belong to the realm of folklore and which are used in appropriate social contexts by those who share in group or community sentiments and aspirations.

Thus the distinction between folklore and non-folklore arises out of the internal differentiations in usages within a society which correlate with social organisation, while the cultivation of artistic forms in folklore tradition by communities and groups arises out of the basic human need for the expression of group and community sentiments.

If we accept this view of folklore as an aspect of group life rather than the earlier but persistent western view of it as an antiquarian pastime or the view that it is found only among marginal groups, we may find some folklore wherever group life or the sense of community is maintained through tradition. However, since folklore includes a wide variety of usages and expressions, we should expect social groups to differ in the range of traditions they cultivate. For example, not all identifiable social groups have their own distinctive music and dance. They may draw on the general repertoire and express their identity and group feeling in other ways.

Secondly, we could differentiate between active or living folklore and folklore that has ceased to be active or extensive, and which may range from items that exist only in the memory of individuals to items that are still cultivated but on a limited scale. In Africa where folklore permeates in-

stitutional life, here and there survivals of traditions that were once extensive can be found in some localities, for fluctuations in usage, fashion and taste are also a feature of folklore traditions.

Thirdly, as literary and musical folklorists have amply demonstrated, where testimonies of oral traditions permit it, one can also deal with the folklore of different historical epochs, or with cumulative additions to or variants of particular traditions.

### *Formal Characteristics*

The identification of folklore in group life can be facilitated by awareness of its modes of expression in speech and behaviour or its modes of communication in other media, as well as its reference systems. In Africa, traditional social behaviour, for example, tends to be formalised for specific situations. Symbolic communication is very much exploited in the thought forms of folklore as well as in movement, verbal and plastic forms in which man reminds himself of the basic meaning of his existence and of his relationship to his fellow-men and the world around him. Hence the world of folklore is rich in imagination and fantasy, and this is what gives it its vitality.

In the performing arts, expressions in the realm of folklore similarly have their own performance traditions and stylistic forms which set them apart from non-folklore types. These forms generally include structures within easy reach of all which allow for group learning and spontaneous participation in certain contexts. Their simplicity does not mean that they have no artistic merit. As Stewart Wilson, at one time President of the International Music Council, has said:

"Folk music is not an embryonic art. It exemplifies the principles of great art and a basis of taste is, therefore, cultivated by its practice".<sup>1</sup>

It is in the same vein that Bela Bartók is quoted by Vargyas to have said that folk songs are "classical models of the way in which a musical idea can be expressed in all its freshness and shapeliness—in short in the very best possible way, in the briefest possible form and with the simplest of means".<sup>2</sup>

Although both observers had the folk music of the western world in mind, their remarks apply also to Africa, for as Kolinski has pointed out, on structural grounds the music performed by social groups and communities in Africa cannot be separated from the mainstream of musical expressions in the folklore tradition. Indeed when it is examined, it will be found that structurally it attains a greater level of complexity than most European folk songs.<sup>3</sup>

This sophistication of traditional African music is due to the fact that African artistic values aim at creating performance traditions not only on the basic level—the level on which special skills are not required—but more especially on the middle level, that is, the level that allows for the development and integration of complex forms with simple forms through the collaboration of non-specialists and specialists or those with more than average command of knowledge of repertoire and techniques. The specialists give leadership or provide special backing to performances by playing the complex parts of the music.

Thus one would hear a chorus supported by a complex drum or xylophone section played by specialists, or singing with improvisatory solo/cantor leads which sustain interest and give character to the performance. Most middle level performances of this nature are cultivated by groups in the nature of associations that have their own folklore traditions, as well as entertainment groups or music clubs.

#### *Specialist Traditions*

The development of performance traditions which give scope to specialists to perform on their own, and on their own technical level, is also given scope in many societies. In Africa such specialist traditions include those of the griots of West Africa, master drummers, and certain types of instrumentalists. In societies with centralised political institutions, specialist traditions are cultivated at the royal courts. They may also be found as special solo or group traditions within the community. In acephalous societies, specialist traditions are cultivated by individuals who perform in appropriate contexts on their own or in ensembles.

By their very nature, specialist traditions are learned traditions which in most cultures are normally outside the realm of folklore. They are more or less cultivated as *art* traditions. However in Africa one rarely finds particular specialist traditions duplicated by non-specialist counterparts. One does not generally find *folk* instruments which are antecedents or replicas of instruments used by specialists—such as one finds in the west. There are no *folk* xylophone ensembles, *folk* fiddle styles but usages practised by specialists who perform for groups or communities. Instead of such duplications, there is complementarity which suggests that usages are regarded as forming a continuum of one tradition in which different levels of sophistication are recognised.

Similarly one does not find folk dances which are basic level counterparts of *art* dances. Instead of this one may find general dance vocabularies for expression at the basic level and additional dance vocabularies for solo and group performances at the middle or specialist levels. The latter are learned traditions. On the whole the dance is not a frivolous art even at the basic level, for it provides both an avenue for self expression and a means of communication.

#### *New African Popular Arts*

It should be evident from the foregoing that the new western influenced African music being practised in Africa today cannot be described as folklore merely because of its popularity. It does not have the social basis of folklore, for it is music being developed in a new specialist tradition but which has not yet developed the middle level types that African traditions encourage.

Similarly while folklorization of the western type theatre adopted in African countries makes this new theatre more acceptable and better appreciated by African audiences, it is also a development in a new specialist tradition which does not have the social base one finds in folklore traditions. That is why it is necessary to distinguish between folklore—the primary source—and folklore presentations or the technique of folklorization which aims at developing new art traditions alongside folklore whose base is in the

traditional setting. Folklore is not the same as popular culture. Folklore is traditional while popular culture invariably has a contemporary outlook.

#### *Modes of Transmission and Cultivation*

Because folklore is community or group oriented, its traditions are acquired within the group by word of mouth, through speech surrogates and what has aptly been described as empirical participation. These have implications not only for the authenticity of the materials that are transmitted, but also for the attitudes which are developed towards particular traditions or the groups that hold them.

It must be emphasised, however, that what sustains folklore within groups is not just its modes of transmission, but also the fact that each member accepts or appropriates what he receives and makes it the basis of his creative thinking and action in relevant contexts. In African performing arts traditions, creative additions to repertoire and improvised variations are often encouraged. There are societies that place a high premium on personal compositions which are performed in social situations as well as societies in which musical genres may be named after their creators where no other labels are provided.

Thus although folklore traditions are essentially group or community traditions, one must not lose sight of the role of the individual—the individual who is a carrier of tradition, the individual who has creative ability and may appropriate to himself the right to re-create, modify or vary existing materials within the limits imposed by tradition, the individual innovator or composer who may create new musical items or introduce new musical types that may become part of the general repertoire. Folklore is, therefore, not altogether impersonal although it is collective acceptance and use that sustain it. Even proverbs may now and then be stated as quotations with appropriate reference to the particular source or author.

#### *Ownership and Performing Rights*

Because of the close identification of groups with folklore, a sense of collective ownership of sets of materials and repertoire is often generated among such groups no matter what the individual authorship of specific items of such sets might be. In Africa, members of a community may regard folklore traditions in the public domain as their heritage. Similarly, the social group that practises a particular tradition identifies itself more closely with it than does the rest of the society. This extends even to musical types in the public domain which are organised for performances on the basis of kinship, age or sex.

Furthermore in Africa, this sense of ownership is tied up with the notion of "performing rights" which tends to be more of an ethical issue than a purely legal one. When I was collecting funeral dirges, drum language, oral texts and music in the Akan area of Ghana, many people willingly gave me items from the repertoires that belonged to their lineages or clans and their own adaptations of stock forms, but they were reluctant to give away those of other groups even though they knew them. For the same reason, a drummer would play the texts of the drum language of his own area and the repertoire of music of which he was custodian, but would show great reluctance in going



outside this repertoire even though because of constant exposure to other traditions, he would be aware of them.

The issues of ownerships and performing rights are naturally more critical in specialist traditions. In Africa this is particularly true of the royal court. A chief would refer to the instruments of his palace and their music as his and the musicians as his servants, even though they may hold their position on unpaid basis. Hence, if the musicians had to play the music for a particular function outside the normal context, they would seek the permission of the chief where custom imposes a restriction on their services. Normally they would exclude certain items from the repertoire they play in such contexts.

Akan oral traditions make references to instances in the past in which some chiefs sought permission from other chiefs to "copy" their instruments or music, as well as cases in which performing rights or ownership came about as a result of conquest or through the establishment of diplomatic relations.

Similar conventions govern other art forms in respect of ownership and use. For example in Ghana, there are chiefly designs and patterns associated with specific royal houses, lineages or clans, as well as patterns with various verbal interpretations that are restricted in respect of ownership or use.

#### *Folklore and Social Change*

Conventions regarding ownership, appropriation and use generally observed by the members of a community may break down or become modified under the stress of social change. They may also be weakened by pressures from the international theatre world and the mass media. Accordingly, the need for establishing new conventions which take full account of traditional usage has begun to be felt in African countries. It seems, however, that this cannot be approached realistically until group traditions are studied not only from the point of view of the understanding and insights they give into cultural values but also in relation to the concept of culture as a heritage so that inventories of items or units of cultural tradition can be set up, drawing largely on the techniques and methods of inventory and classification developed in folklore studies. I believe that the cultural heritage approach of folklore rather than the philosophical approach of theoretical anthropology is what is needed before the legal protection of unwritten materials of folklore and other forms of oral tradition can be formulated. It is not enough to define folklore. The items of folklore or specific units of tradition that need legal protection must be identified.

In the final analysis, this means extensive recording, transcription, documentation and cataloguing—a task that has begun on a small scale in many African countries that have Radio and Television, Departments of Information and Culture, Institutes of Art and Culture etc. Modern technology should certainly facilitate this work.

#### *Approach to Folklore as Living Tradition*

It is this need that has inspired this brief review which has attempted to define folklore from an African perspective in order to highlight the common boundaries of African and non-African traditions which are independent of

economic idiosyncracies. I have assumed the existence of folklore in Africa simply because the materials subsumed under this term in other cultures also occur in Africa and now abound in various publications as well as on films and recordings.<sup>4</sup> However, I have taken a more functional view of folklore which the African situation suggests rather than the evolutionary or historical view which accounts for the state of folklore in the west but does not account for the universal need for folklore.

I have assumed also that the internal differentiation within a society that supports folklore traditions need not be of the same order as what one finds in the west. The cultivation of folklore need not depend on the emergence of an elite/folk class dichotomy, or on western type of social stratification which apparently creates low and high cultures within one and the same society. In certain countries of West Africa where society is stratified, it is not the upper class who cultivate their art music or middle level traditions but the low class.

For the same reason, it seems to me also completely irrelevant to describe folklore in terms of decadence or as something which lies "in the shadows of high civilization" and so give it a pejorative connotation. One can understand the superiority complex of the early folklorists who not only accepted the term folklore as an observer term but also set themselves apart from the folk. But it is difficult to appreciate its continued propagation by scholars of today particularly when they extend the description to non-western societies by extrapolation.

As Richard Dorson, an eminent American folklorist, points out, current studies of folklore—at any rate in America—are no longer confined to archaic folklore. "Newer and broader perspectives are taking the field-workers into the cities, the factories, the entertainment world, the schools, the universities."<sup>5</sup>

Because of the historical experience of the west, it is generally assumed that folklore and non-folklore should exist in separate camps corresponding to those of social stratification. The African situation shows a continuum. The same people may participate in folklore and non-folklore. And this applies as much to traditional African society as to contemporary African society, for folklore traditions seem to be permeating some contemporary institutions.

Because of this continuum, in the African situation it is more realistic to think about social *groups* than social *classes* when dealing with folklore. Secondly in order to emphasise the continuum, it is better to put more emphasis on *tradition* than on *folk* when dealing with categories of folklore, and to talk about *traditional* music, traditional instruments, traditional dances, traditional festivals, rather than *folk* music, folk instruments, folk dances, folk festivals etc. Whereas the folk terminology may be appropriate for the west, in Africa the important distinctions are between traditional and non-traditional, and the differences in levels of sophistication within tradition.

Because of the continuum of experience and the lack of clear demarcation between folk and non-folk, for us in Africa the carriers of folklore are not marginal units of society but an integral and functioning part of society. Contemporary African society looks to these knowledgeable in different traditions

for leadership. It is to them that they look for the basis of their cultural identity. Hence in African scale of values, the carriers of tradition are culturally not the low stratum of society as definitions of western folklore would like us to describe them. They are the experts in the field of traditional values which contemporary African society in the wake of its cultural renaissance has come to prize.

#### *Folklore and Cultural Policy*

It seems likely that the Cultural Policies of African Governments will encourage the development of the continuum which exists in traditional society between folklore and non-folklore as well as the re-integration of those who have been cut off, through no fault of theirs, from their roots with the traditions of the groups to which they belong. In Ghana, for example, more and more of the so-called elite participate in the traditional festivals of the communities to which they belong. Quite a number of them have accepted positions of leadership in their communities which involve them directly in the traditional expressions of their people. When such men study the folklore of their people, they do so as involved scholars committed to the development of the cultures with which they identify themselves.

It seems likely also that the Cultural Policies of African Governments will continue to give a great deal of attention to folklore in its traditional setting as well as its transfer in various forms to contemporary institutions—including governmental institutions. The concept of collective ownership and the question of performing rights which already exist in traditional society might be taken a stage further as the folklore of each of the ethnic groups that make up African nations formally becomes a component of the national heritage that might appropriately be legally protected from the predatory activities of those who have developed a mania for collecting.

Protection however must allow for the maximum use of folklore in creative contexts as well as its cultivation as a primary level for the expression of consciousness.

At the Second World Black and African Festival of Arts and Culture held in January 1976 in Lagos, it was evident that this was the goal that many African countries have set themselves. One can only hope therefore that in spite of the rapid social changes now taking place in Africa, this new interest in folklore as a way of life and a source of creative expression will ensure its continuity as a living tradition.

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## The Technique of Medieval Sanskrit Drama

Usha Bhise

#### *The Background*

The *Natya Shastra* of Bharata, a work on ancient Indian stage-craft, also covers aesthetic problems such as the rousing of sentiments appropriate to a theme. A majority of scholars agree that this work belonged to the third century B.C. From the *Ashtadhyayi* of Panini (fifth century B.C.), which refers to one *Natasutra* (literally a book of rules for actors), it appears that the Indian genius had begun to ponder over such problems even earlier. There is also a strong possibility of the same *Natasutra* being developed into the *Natya Shastra* of Bharata, who made use of the material that was available to him and moulded it into the shape in which we find it to-day. Indian literature knows of many such cases where a humble piece has developed into a monumental work through successive redactions, the most prominent example being that of the *Mahabharata*. Once the name of a sage like Bharata came to be associated with the *Natya Shastra*, it became a Bible for future generations of dramatists and was even treated as the fifth Veda meant for the education and uplift of the lower castes. Innovations were introduced in the *Shastra* in later centuries but care was taken not to violate the injunctions of Bharata. Successive authors spent considerable space and effort to prove that the innovations were in conformity with this time-honoured manual of stagecraft.

The *Natya Shastra* contains an account of a couple of dramas which were staged on Mount Kailasa before Shiva. At the end of the performance suggested an improvement in the presentation of the dramas which mainly consisted of mime. He suggested that the beautiful gestures and rhythmic movements of the Tandava dance (which he himself performed) might be introduced in the drama. It may be noted that Tandava had yet to acquire the meaning of energetic or masculine dance. The term is derived from the personal name Tanduv and the dance was known for beautiful and rhythmic movements of limbs and various postures along with compositions based on them. This event emphasises the prominent role played by the classical dance in the presentation of Sanskrit drama. The term *natya* is derived from the root *nat* which itself is a Prakritised form of *nrt*. All the three categories of bodily movements, namely *nrtta*, *nrtya* and *natya*, are thus traceable to the one and same root *nrt* (to dance). They are, however, used as technical terms, each having a connotation of its own. According to the *Abhinayadarpana* of Nandikeshwara, *nrtta* is a pure dance sequence, which does not express moods or meaning; *Nrtya* is a mime performed to the accompaniment of song while *natya* has some traditional story for its theme and is presented through dance. It literally means what had to be danced or performed by a *nata*, originally a dancer. *Nrtya* sets poetry to music and rhythm. The poetry is

interpreted by the dancer, who tries to portray the sentiments (*sthayibhava*) and the fleeting moods (*sancharibhava*). Each word of poetry is interpreted in as many different ways as possible. The mode of presentation rests on the principle of suggestion rather than imitation. The *nritya* movements are not an imitation of life; they suggest moods and events. Events in life and the moods of the human mind could thus be presented in a graceful manner.

The mythological literature of India had its beginnings in the Vedas. It developed considerably in the later centuries, taking the shape of the two great epics and the Puranas. The Puranic themes became quite popular among the poets, giving rise to a class of derivative literature, consisting of poems and dramas depicting the legends. The mythological themes necessitated the presentation of scenes like Narasimha drawing out the entrails of the demon Hiranyakashipu, Bhima sucking the blood of Duhshasana and the fire from the third eye of Shiva burning down the god of love. Scenes of violence and death were prohibited by Bharata. They could be reported, but they could not be enacted on the stage. The dramatist thus found himself in a dilemma. On the one hand, there were the injunctions of the *Natyashastra* prohibiting such scenes; on the other, there was the necessity of including them in the drama, for they had a halo of sanctity around them. The Puranas, after all, found a place in the list of scriptures by the side of the Vedas, as is suggested

by the expression श्रीस्मृतिपुराणोक्त The presentation of such scenes

posed a double problem: (i) performing them in consonance with the dictates of Bharata; (ii) overcoming such technical difficulties as producing fire from the eyes of Shiva or breaking open the throat of a human being. The *nritya* technique was capable of suggesting such happenings through symbolic gestures and it came in handy for stage-directors. It was a combination of scientific dance, elaborate gesture, lovely costumes and music. The movements of the limbs, trunk, head and eyes as codified by Bharata denoted objects and actions as well as moods. The *hasta*-s (hand-gestures) aimed at indirect suggestion rather than direct exposition. Thus emotion and narration were transmuted into stylised gesture. The dancer spoke through the language of gesture. The background was created without scenic effects. Through this highly imaginative technique both the problems mentioned above were solved. The gestures codified by Bharata were employed in the presentation of the play, so that no further efforts for harmonising them with the *Natyashastra* were necessary. The principle of indirect suggestion on which the technique was based resolved the problems in the presentation of the various difficult situations.

#### Later dramatists

The adoption of this technique called for a moulding of the script of dramas. In the Fourth Act of the *Uttararamacharita* by Bhavabhuti, Lava tells Janaka that Vaimiki has sent a certain portion of the manuscript of the *Ramayana* to the hermitage of Bharatamuni, the teacher of *nritya*, *gita* and *vadya*. The epic themes being enacted as academic (*shastric*) performances itself speaks of their popularity. Such themes required skilful treatment. In this particular scene from the *Uttararamacharita*, there is a reference to

Bharata himself rendering portions of the epic fit for dramatic representation. Thus the tradition of dramatising such themes and narratives seems to have begun at this point and become increasingly popular. This in turn triggered off an era in the history of the Sanskrit drama where dramatists, making use of the technique, deliberately introduced scenes which would appear impressive on the stage. The trend seems to have been in full swing in the eighth, ninth and tenth centuries of the Christian era. It may be noted here that acting was not confined to the full-fledged Sanskrit drama patronised by the royal court. It was also displayed in the lesser types listed as the *Uparupaka*-s

In the literature on Rhetorics it is usual to describe the various forms of drama in terms of their *vrtti* (style). The term *vrtti* stands for the activity of speech, mind and body ( वाङ्मनःकायव्यापार ). In the *Bharati-vrtti*, the speech element is stronger. It mainly relies on *pathya* (the dialogues). This style, prominent in the works of earlier dramatists like Bhasa, was now on the decline and made way for the *Kaishiki* style. This style makes use of lovely costumes, dance and music, and presents scenes in which male and female characters are involved. The scripts of dramas written in the *Kaishiki* style abound in poetic descriptions, characterised by elaborate imagery and, stylistic forms of expression. While reading the scripts one cannot help feeling that they are good enough for quiet study, but failures on the stage since they lack the quality of crisp, fluent dialogue. The scenes are dull in action and the descriptions appear monotonous. Compared to earlier dramatists like Bhasa (third century B.C.), Shudraka (first century B.C.) and Kalidasa (third or fourth century A.D.), later dramatists like Bhattanarayana (eighth century A.D.), Bhavabhuti (ninth century A.D.) and Rajasekhara (tenth century A.D.) show a marked tendency towards introducing a descriptive element in their dramas. They have often invited the criticism that their era represents the decadent phase of Sanskrit drama. Such criticism has obviously ignored the technique of presentation, which demanded an appropriate text. The unusual scenes and the lengthy descriptive passages are justified on the count of the technique. The technique was first introduced for the sake of Puranic themes and later extended to secular ones. Going a step further, the dramatists deliberately included scenes which were amenable to an introduction of the dance. They even went to the extent of inventing out-of-the-way situations, based quite often on the supernatural element. These scenes occupy a considerable part of the drama even though they are not so important for the development of the plot.

#### Venisamhara

Bhattanarayana, the author of *Venisamhara*, appears to experiment with such a technique. The title *Venisamhara* means 'the tying up of loose, dishevelled hair'. It has a reference to the vow of Bhimasena. The Pandavas had lost all their possessions (including their wife Draupadi) through the dice game. Duryodhana, the Kaurava chief, ordered Draupadi to be brought to the royal court. She refused to do so because she was unwell, and not in a fit condition to appear in public. Duryodhana then sent his brother Duhshasana to bring her. He dragged her by the hair to the assembly and also tried to strip

her. Duryodhana had by then already bared his thigh, intimating to her that she should occupy it. This roused Bhimasena. He vowed that he would drink the blood of Duhshasana, that he would break the thigh of Duryodhana with his mace, and that, with his hands smeared with the blood of Duryodhana, he would tie up the hair of Draupadi. She would allow her hair to remain loose till the vow was fulfilled. In the interlude before the third act, Bhattanarayana introduces a scene which takes place very close to the battle-field. Two demons, Rudhirapriya and Vasagandha, are introduced. They are trying to feast upon the blood and the flesh of the dead warriors. The pair of demons is manufactured by the dramatist and finds no sanction in the original story. Without a suggestive technique the enacting of this scene would become repulsive.

#### Malatimadhava

Two of the three plays of Bhavabhuti deal with the story of Rama. The third play *Malatimadhava* may be described as a bourgeois comedy. It is a drama in ten acts, technically known as *Prakarana*-s. The main theme is the love story of Madhava and Malati, culminating in marriage. The end is happy but the course of love proceeds along a thorny path. The brother-in-law of the king (*Rajashyalaka*), who has had a glimpse of Malati on a certain occasion, is enamoured of her charms and asks for her hand. Malati's father, a minister, does not know of Malati's love for Madhava and consents to the proposal of the *Rajashyalaka*. In despair Madhava goes to the cemetery, quite convinced that no human effort is going to help him. He tries to win over some spirits to bring about a miracle. With this purpose in mind he tries to sell human flesh to spirits and goblins. The Fifth Act opens with a description of the cemetery and its inmates, the spirits. While selling the flesh, Madhava hears a woman's screams, emanating from the temple of Chamunda. He rushes to the spot hoping to rescue the unknown woman. To his surprise and horror he finds Malati about to be slaughtered by Aghoraghanta and Kapalakundala as an offering to the goddess. The Kapalika magicians, notorious for the practice of black magic, believed that the offering of a charming girl could bestow on them supernatural powers. Madhava tries to rescue his beloved by fighting with Aghoraghanta. At this moment, the men, sent by Malati's father in search of the missing girl, surround the temple. The wicked plan of Aghoraghanta is foiled.

Bhavabhuti has introduced four verses in the temple scene which pose a problem. These are Verses 22, 23, 32 and 34 (*Nirnayasagar* Ed., 1936). They have one characteristic in common. Each one of these verses is uttered by two characters simultaneously.

सावर्त्तभानिशुभसंभ्रमनमङ्गुल निष्पीडन-  
न्यञ्चत्कर्परकूर्मकम्पविगलद्रुसाख्यस्मिति।  
पाताल प्रतिमल्लगल्लविबरप्रक्षिप्तसप्तार्चनं  
वन्दे नन्दितनीलकण्ठपरिषद्वचनं तव क्रीडितम् ॥ २२ ॥

[We venerate your sport (of dancing) in which the stability of this part of the universe is disturbed on account of the shaking of the Tortoise, whose back-bone is pressed down by the heavy pressure of the earth suddenly bending down in consequence of the forceful planting of your foot (literally the trampling of Nishumbha), in which the seven oceans are thrown into the cavity of your mouth which rivals the netherworld (in expanse) and the manifestation of which gives delight to the assembly of the attendants of Shiva.]

प्रचलितकरिकृन्निपर्यन्तचञ्चलखाद्यातभिन्नेन्दुनिष्यन्दमानामृत-  
श्वेतजीवत्कपालावलीमुक्तचण्डाट्टहासत्रसद्भूतिभूतप्रवृत्तस्तुति।  
भ्रसदसितभुजङ्गुभोगाङ्गदग्रान्धिनैष्पीडनोत्फुल्लफुल्लकणापीठनि-  
र्यद्विषज्योतिरुज्जृम्भणोद्गामरव्यस्तविस्तारिदोःखण्डपर्यासितदम्भा-  
धरम् ॥

उबलदनलपिशङ्कुनेत्रच्छटाभारभीमोनमाङ्गुभामेप्रस्तुतात्मानचक्र-  
क्रियास्यूतदिग्भागमुचुङ्कुखट्वाङ्गुशृङ्गध्वजोद्धतिविक्षिप्ततारागणम्।  
प्रमुदितकटपूतनोच्चालवेतालतालस्फुटत्कर्णसंभ्रान्तगौरीघना-  
होषहृष्यन्मनस्यम्बकानन्दि वस्ताखनं देवि भूयादरिष्ये च हृष्ये च नः ॥  
॥ २३ ॥

[Oh goddess, may the dance of you two be for our welfare and joy—the dance in which your praise is commenced by the various creatures terrified by the fierce and loud laughter of the rows of skulls revived by the dropping of the nectar upon them from the moon pierced by the strokes of the nails protruding from the skirts of the elephant-hide moved about; in which the mountains are hurled off by your spreading arms tossed about and frightful on account of the uprise of the poisonous flames issuing forth from the broad hoods widely extended in consequence of the firm pressing of the armet-like coils of the bodies of hissing black serpents; in which the divisions of the universe are connected by the fiery circle, as of a fire-brand, traced out by your whirling head rendered frightful by its being covered over with the mass of flames issuing from the eye tawny on account of the fire blazing in it; in which the constellations of the stars are tossed about by the flapping of the banner attached to the horn-like point of your club, and which brings delight to Shiva who is pleased at heart by the close embrace of Gauri appalled by her ears being stunned by the clapping of the hands of the frantic vetala-s and the delighted ghosts and goblins.]

These verses may be justified on the ground that they are the joint prayers of Aghoraghanta and Kapalakundala to the goddess. But Verses 32 and 34 are uttered simultaneously by the two rivals, Madhava and Aghoraghanta. Malati and Kapalakundala, who are apprehensive of the consequences of the fight that is now in the offing, are consoled by Madhava and Aghoraghanta in verse 32.



धैर्यं निधेहि हृदये हत एव पापः  
किं वा कदाचिदपि केनचिदन्वभावि।  
सारङ्गः संहतिविधाविभक्तुः शूट-  
कुट्टाकपाणिकुलिशस्थ हरेः प्रमादः ॥३२॥

[“Compose your heart: the villain dies: in a fight with a deer has any one ever experienced a mishap to the lion whose thunder-bolt claws cleave the peak-like temples of elephants?”]

Verse 34 is recited after handing over Malati to her relatives. Here Madhava and Aghoraghanta curse each other and start a fight.

कठोरास्थिश्रित्यव्यतिकरधणात्कारमुस्वरः  
स्वरस्नायुच्छेदक्षणे विहितवेगव्युपरमः।  
निरातङ्गः पङ्केष्विव पिशितस्वच्छेभुं निपत-  
न्नेसिर्गात्रंगान्नं सपदि लवशस्ते विकिरितु ॥३४॥

[“Let this sword scatter every one of your limbs piecemeal, the sword, noisy with the sound caused by its coming in contact with the joints of your hard bones, having its quickness for a moment arrested by its cutting the tough muscles, and playfully moving among the fleshy parts (of your body) as among balls of mud”]

Commentators on the drama are quite aware of the awkward situation posed in the presentation of these verses on the stage. Tripurari commenting on Verse 32 says:

माधवो मातृतीमघोरघटस्थ कपालकुण्डलामेकेन उभाभ्यां  
पाशेन उभयत्रापि तुल्यार्थेन श्लोकेन समाधासयन्तौ  
युगपदेन आहुतः ... न चान्न श्लेषभ्रान्तिः कर्तव्या।  
वाक्यद्वयस्यैव युगपदुभाभ्यां पाठादिति।

[Madhava addresses Malati and Aghoraghanta addresses Kapelekundala with one recitation. Trying to create confidence in both with a single verse which has the same meaning for both, they speak simultaneously. One should not mistake it for a pun. Both are simultaneously reciting the two sentences].

He has the following comment to make on Verse 34.

एकमेव वाक्यं उभौ उभयोद्देशेन प्रयुज्जानते।

[Both Madhava and Aghoraghanta are using the same sentence as addressed to each other.]

Thus, for Tripurari, each verse stands for two different sentences. Jagaddhara introduces Verse 32 with,

द्वयोभयं ज्ञात्वोभौ आहुतुः।

[Knowing the apprehension of the two (women) both say.]

He introduces Verse 34 with,

माधवाघोरघटौ द्वावप्येकश्लोकेन प्रहारव्यापारं आहुतुः।

[With the same verse both Madhava and Aghoraghanta speak about the action of striking.]

The expression “action of striking” is significant. The recitation of the verses is accompanied by action. Thus two characters on the stage are engaged in symmetrical actions, probably introducing the element of dance in the scene. This also supplies a clue to verses 22 and 23 which could likewise be dance-sequences introduced deliberately by the dramatist. These two verses refer to the *kridita* (playful) and the *tandava* (boisterous) dance respectively, thus creating a convenient situation for introducing dance.

Act V of *Malatimadhava* abounds in sentiments like the *Bibhatsa* (disgust), *Bhayanaka* (terror), *Raudra* (fury) and *Adbhuta* (wonder). The description of the ghosts and evil spirits is an example of *Bibhatsa*, the idea of the impending slaughter of Malati gives rise to *Bhayanaka*, the kidnapping of Malati introduces *Adbhuta*, while the quarrel between Madhava and Aghoraghanta creates *Raudra*. The inclusion of these four sentiments in one and the same Act makes it extremely tense. Moreover, it takes place in the cemetery in the thick of night. The background is thus quite gloomy. Hence Bhavabhuti perhaps sought to adopt measures to relieve the tension. One of the devices used is the introduction of the element of devotion through the prayer to the goddess in two verses. The same purpose is served by the touch of *Shringara* involved in the short conversation between Madhava and Malati.

The second device is the introduction of the four verses discussed above. Bhavabhuti has introduced these four dance sequences against a

dreary background and in an Act which does not have much action but is saturated with the tension caused by the sentiments of *Bhayanaka*, *Raudra*, etc. The verses lift the tension and make the Act as lively and interesting as possible. Verse 22 eulogises the *kridita* (sportive, gentle) dance of the goddess, Chamunda. The crushing of Nishumbha under the feet of the goddess, which causes the displacement of the earth from the back of the Primeval Tortoise, is also mentioned in the verse. The text here lends itself to dance. Verse 23 praises the boisterous *tandava* dance of the goddess. The slipping of the upper garment made of elephant-hide, the dripping of the nectar from the crescent moon, the rising hood of the serpent around Shiva's neck, the rotation of the head resembling the whirlings of the fire-brand are mentioned here. These phrases are full of action which can easily be expressed through dance poses. Moreover, the Dandaka metre is employed here. It consists of two units of three short syllables each (*na-gana*), followed by units, each having the sequence long-short-long (*ra-gana*) upto the end of the line, thus developing a steady rhythmic pattern.

#### *Sattaka-s*

Rajashekhara, the tenth century dramatist, introduced a new form of drama, the *Sattaka*. The reason for believing Rajashekhara to be responsible for this form is that in the Prologue of his *Sattaka*, the *Karpuramanjari*, it is defined for the first time. There he tries to show that it is a division of the *Natika* type of drama defined by Bharata. The *Natika* is a drama in four Acts, having a king for its hero. The theme is invented and deals with a royal love affair which includes conciliation, anger and trickery. The heroine is either from the harem or from the music-hall. It has a queen, a jester, a go-between and attendants but no sub-hero (*pithamarda*). The *Sattaka* differed from the *Natika* on the following counts: it did not have any interludes; the acts were called *Javanikantara* instead of *Anka*. The sentiments of the Heroic, the Frightful, the Odious and the Fierce were taboo. The sentiment of Wonder, however, occupied a prominent place. The *Kaishiki* as well as the *Bharati vrtti-s* were employed.

The word *Sattaka* is derived from the Dravidian root *atu*, to dance; hence the word *Sattaka* may be analysed as *sa-atta-ka*, 'accompanied by dance'. It reminds us of words such as *Kudiyattam* and *Mohiniattam*. Making the *Sattaka* a variety of the *Natika* was an ingenious device to bring it under the school of Bharata. In spirit, however, it shows affinities with the Kathakali. The divisions of the *Sattaka* are called *Javanikantara* (divided by the curtain). The term reminds us of the curtain *Thirassila* which has a special function on the Kathakali stage. It is held up by two persons before the commencement of the performance and the propitiatory dance is performed behind it. After this the curtain is lowered and a divine couple makes its entry on the stage. It is then dropped to the ground and removed during the performance. The curtain, thus, marks the important events of the play. The *Javanikantara* is a reminder of this practice.

In the development of the plot, Rajashekhara has made use of the supernatural element to create the sentiment of Wonder. In the opening Act,

the king and the queen are shown in the company of a magician, who claims that he could grant any human desire through his superhuman powers. The king wishes to see the most charming girl in the world. At this point the magician, Bhairavananda, produces Karpuramanjari, the heroine, on the stage, Karpuramanjari is having a bath. She is described as one clad in wet garments, with the damp strands of her hair clinging to her face. The very idea of presenting a girl bathing on the stage is not in tune with the age. The scene would seem to cross the limits of decency and one keeps wondering how the scene was received by the spectators. Bharata's dramaturgy would certainly prohibit such scenes being shown on the stage. Even here the situation would be softened if the medium of presentation is taken into consideration. The wet garment and the damp strands of hair are not physically shown on the stage but simply suggested by the code of *mudra-s*. Thus, Rajashekhara could be spared the blemish of displaying bad taste through this scene.

After Rajashekhara the *Sattaka* did not lose its popularity. Half a dozen *Sattaka-s* are extant. An analysis of their contents reveals that the story element is meagre and stereotyped: a king falls in love with a charming damsel; the queen finds out what is happening; she tries to put obstacles in the way of the lovers and, finally, it all ends in a happy marriage. The prose portion abounds in elaborate sentences with long compounds, ill-suited for plain dialogue. Verse after verse describes nature and the charms of beautiful women. All this would prove cumbersome were it presented in the normal way. The imagery, which abounds in lotuses, bees, *malaya* breezes, snakes, the whirling movements of bees and streams as well as the knitting of the eye-brows, side-glances, nectar of the ears, matches perfectly with the code of *mudra-s*. The descriptions afford an opportunity to the dancer to show his skill. The phrases which are full of action inspire the dancers to interpret them into *mudra-s* and please the spectators with graceful movements, setting aside the element of dialogue for the time being.

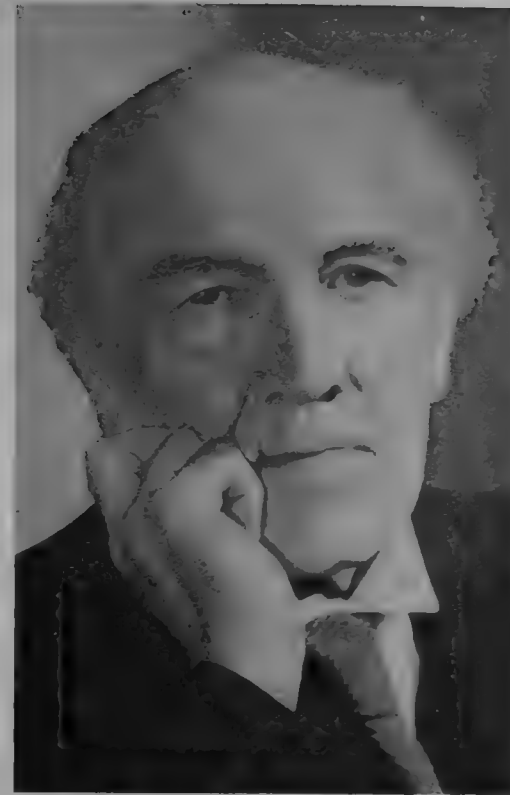
In addition to the diction of the *Sattaka-s*, we find that some of the scenes are also technique-oriented. Such scenes include a sub-scene. The *Karpuramanjari* offers the double-scene thrice. In the Second Act, the king and the jester watch the swinging-scene in the plantain arbour. Similarly, the king, standing in another part of the garden, witnesses the *ashoka-dohada* (fulfilling the desire of the Ashoka tree which blossoms when it is hit by the foot of a beautiful maiden). The third time we come across the double-scene is when the *charchari* dance is watched by the king from the roof of his palace.

In the *Uttararamacharita* of Bhavabhuti such a situation is introduced twice. In the Third Act, the forest-deity, Vasanti, and Sita watch the love-lorn condition of Rama and listen to his laments. In the last Act, the playwright presents a drama within the drama. It is known as the *Garbhanataka* and is defined as a drama inserted in the midst of a regular act of a drama. It is a complete drama in miniature having a starting point and fulfilment at the end. The only difference is that it is a one-act composition. Here the sub-scene is a drama on the life of Rama, beginning with the abandonment of Sita, written by sage Valmiki. It is witnessed by gods and men alike. These scenes

call for a zonal treatment of the stage. In the absence of an elaborate stage set-up, the scenes could be presented only through a highly imaginative medium.

Such is the role played by dance in the medieval Indian drama. The *Natya Shastra* infused the *nrtya* element in the drama. It was found that the technique was quite convenient for it could handle some of the intricate situations found in mythological themes. After the eighth century, however, scenes were manufactured to match the technique. Indian drama then became technique-oriented, inviting the criticism of scholars who simply *read* the plays. They described the period as a decadent stage in Indian drama. Perhaps the period did not represent decadence as much as the adoption of a new technique.

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Nicolas Medtner (1880-1951)

Peter Cooper

The Russian composer Nikolai Karlovich Medtner has an especial connection with India through the good offices of the Maharajah of Mysore, who financed a series of recordings by the composer himself from 1947 to 1950 for HMV. Although a sick man, Medtner rallied wonderfully to record piano works, the piano concertos, and with other artists including Elizabeth Schwarzkopf, songs and violin pieces. Three out of the four

projected volumes were issued by the Medtner Society and they are a wonderful testimony to the work of this composer, as yet known only to a discerning minority of music-lovers. The world owes a lasting debt to the generosity of the Maharajah, a rare example of a beneficent cultivated prince. He is not forgotten by the current Medtner Society whose headquarters are in New Zealand and whose London branch is promoting the cause of Medtner's music especially in 1980, the centenary year. India will not forget the Maharajah's munificence either when concerts will be given in Bombay in February to commemorate him and the composer. The Medtner celebrations will be world-wide.

The Maharajah of Mysore was keenly interested in Russian music, paying a visit to Rachmaninoff in Switzerland in 1939. Rachmaninoff considered Medtner the best composer of his time and must have drawn the young prince's attention to him. The Maharajah's favourite Medtner work was the 2nd Piano Concerto: no doubt the spiritual beauty and philosophic content of the slow movement particularly appealed to him. Medtner repaid his debt to the Maharajah by dedicating the 3rd Piano Concerto to him. Unfortunately they never met; but after Medtner's death in 1951, his widow asked Alfred Swan, Medtner's American biographer, to send his translation of *The Muse and the Fashion*, Medtner's artistic testimony, to the Maharajah.

There is little documentation of Medtner's life, and as yet, no English biography. Swan's life is written in German, and there are French and Russian biographies. There is, however, a Memorial Volume of Medtner edited by Richard Holt (Dennis Dobson, London 1955) to which Ernest Newman made an illuminating contribution, and it contains a short biographical sketch by his widow. A selection of his letters was published in Russia in 1973 and a complete Soviet edition of his music in twelve volumes from 1959 to 1969, now out of print. It is the difficulty of obtaining Medtner's music which is the principal obstacle to his becoming widely known at the present time. Students have to resort to secondhand copies which are not easy to find, or rely on library copies.

Medtner was born in Moscow on January 6, 1880 (new style) December 24, 1879 (old style) and lived in Russia until 1921. His career at the Moscow conservatoire was brilliant, and he graduated, with the rarely awarded gold medal, in 1900. His piano teachers there were Pabst and Safonoff, his harmony and composition professors Arensky and Taneieff. The latter had a very high opinion of his gifts, and at the time of the Scriabin furore said that Medtner's was the more original harmony. After his departure from Russia in 1921, Medtner lived in Germany until 1924, then France until 1935, when he settled in England until his death in London on November 13, 1951. He made two concert tours as pianist in America in 1924 and 1929, and one return visit to Russia in 1927, playing his latest compositions, including the 2nd Concerto.

Like all those displaced by the Russian revolution he was desperately homesick for the Old Russia all his life, and this nostalgia, coupled with his lack of sympathy for twentieth century music, made his life unhappy.

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**MEDTNER SOCIETY**

*Volume One*





But he had the loyal and devoted support of his wife Anna, whom Rachmaninoff considered an ideal helpmate for a musician. He was a man who would never forsake his muse whatever difficulties he encountered and he never compromised his artistic integrity, which often caused discomfort to himself and others. In spite of his outstanding pianistic gifts he would not devote himself to a concert career, preferring to concentrate on composition. Nor would he teach in any regular capacity, for the same reason. This often led to financial straits and Rachmaninoff helped him out many times in difficult situations. In all his struggles he retained an iron determination to succeed as a composer.

Perhaps the strongest bid for the survival of his music is its timelessness. Although he said he had been born a hundred years too late, his music cannot be considered classic; nor is it romantic in the conventional sense, as its objectivity prevents that. "Modernism" or dissonance for its own sake was anathema to him. Some have called him a Russian Brahms, a comparison which he detested. In fact he was always annoyed by any reference to his German ancestry (his great-grandfather had emigrated to Russia at the end of the eighteenth century) as he was descended on his mother's side from a very eminent artistic Russian family, the Goedicke. His music is not obviously nationalistic but is nonetheless Russian for all that; it never lost its energy and optimism. Perhaps his most characteristic works are the three Hymns in Praise of Toil (*Before Work, At the Anvil and After Work*) for piano, whose sturdiness never deserted him in all his composition and performance.

It is interesting to examine the reasons why Medtner is not so well known as his contemporaries, Rachmaninoff and Scriabin. He never wrote a piece which was suitable for amateur pianists, which explains why his music is largely out of print. Rachmaninoff established world popularity as a young man with his celebrated Prelude in C sharp minor, which was very fashionable with amateurs in the early years of this century. They seldom seem to play it now, but it ensured Rachmaninoff's name before he went to America and filled concert halls for him all over the world. He grew to detest it, as he had to play it at every concert before the audience would leave the hall. Even amateurs could play Scriabin's early Chopinesque Preludes too. But Medtner's piano writing is formidable, daunting to the most capable professionals.

There is a quality of austerity and aloofness about Medtner's music which does not easily win it friends. He did not have the melodic appeal of either Rachmaninoff or Scriabin whose themes have a soaring lyricism. Too often Medtner's themes are contained in a narrow compass, with much repetition of notes. When Medtner does become more expansive, as in the second movement or the second piano concerto, the effect is much more eloquent, overwhelmingly so. Even in the songs the melodies cannot be easily recalled, as in the songs of Schubert, the supreme melodist. The interest seems to be concentrated in the piano part. This is Medtner's greatest limitation: he thought always in terms of the piano. Had Scriabin and Rachmaninoff not written one solo piano work they would be remembered today for their massive orchestral symphonies

and tone poems. Medtner hated orchestration, finding the orchestration of the piano concertos a thankless task. In this he was the opposite of Tchaikowsky, who was happiest when writing for orchestra, and somewhat inhibited in solo piano pieces. The only composer to achieve universal popularity as a piano specialist was Chopin, but then, as Neville Cardus said, "If the piano had been able to compose, it would have composed like Chopin".

The piano writing of the great early nineteenth century composer-pianists, such as Chopin and Liszt, had a clarity and sparseness of texture which later composers lost. Medtner seemed to enjoy complication for its own sake. Chopin and Liszt could paint a picture, evoke an atmosphere by the simplest of means. In a few bars Liszt establishes the peculiar stillness and calm of the Wallensee in Switzerland, or Chopin with an economy of notes conjures up a moonlight night in some of his early Nocturnes. Chopin's writing itself became more involved as he grew older, but late nineteenth century Russian composers became very profuse, so much so that often the effect is that of more matter, less art. Medtner's piano writing can be very thick, with passages lying in the heavy bass strings of the piano.

Formally, too, Medtner's works often seem to lack symmetry. Some of the 14 piano sonatas tend to sprawl, but this again was a late nineteenth century characteristic, the fondness for a big canvas. If Medtner's themes sometimes seem to lack inspiration, what he does with them is truly astounding. In fact the "brain-stuff" in his music is always evident. Most late nineteenth century composers wore their heart on their sleeve, but in Medtner's case, it was his brain which was more apparent. As Ernest Newman put it, his music was not for the "man in the street", but those who liked it valued it highly.

For Medtner is a uniquely individual composer, and his music is not likely to lose its appeal to specialist listeners all over the world. This is obvious from the world-wide response to the interest in the London branch of the Medtner Society in Europe, America and Australasia. The numbers may not be large, but the discerning few appraise its worth. There are over 100 songs set to wonderful poems of Pushkin, Goethe, Lermontov and Fet. It was his settings of great poets which was particularly mentioned in the address in his honour which greeted him on his return to the Moscow concert platform in 1927. Few musicians can have received a more beautifully sincere tribute than the one made on that occasion. Russian musicians had not forgotten his concerts of his own works from 1903 to 1921 and there was no mistaking their heartfelt appreciation of his return visit to his native land.

Truly he never found such a responsive audience after he left Russia; only in England before 1939 was there anything like it. After the war his music seemed forgotten, but in recent years a number of British and Russian pianists have taken up Medtner again in broadcast, record and concert performances. Its difficulty is a great challenge, but at least the familiar repertoire seems easier to play after it. It is quite evident from contemporary accounts and from the recordings which Medtner made

in his latter years that he was a superlatively good pianist. It is a pity that these performances remain on 78's but it is to be hoped that one day they will be transferred to LP's. Perhaps the Russians will effect this transfer, and an English company follow suit.

Medtner's greatest achievement was in his three piano concertos, but it is unlikely that they will ever gain the universal popularity of the Rachmaninoff concertos. They are much more difficult to play, and not nearly so clear in outline. Rachmaninoff's mastery of form is as evident in the piano concertos as in his symphonies. They have a wonderful sense of proportion, of contrast. Too often Medtner seems to lack direction, but never energy and drive. The three concertos (early, middle and late) are distinctive in their separate character. The first begins magnificently with 5 descending octaves for the piano, "my atomic bombs", as he later called them. The orchestra then takes up a surging theme in the manner of the Rachmaninoff C minor concerto, with accompanying figuration for the pianist. Unfortunately the structure seems to collapse in the intricate variations which substitute for a development section and the work's second subject is insufficiently striking or contrasting. However there is a wonderful apotheosis at the end in the plain C major resolution of the dark harmonies which make up the one-movement work, the piano arpeggios and the final single C's deep in the bass. The 2nd Concerto, also in C minor, has a more successful structure, although the complete cadenza and coda of the first movement are very long. The beauty of the 2nd movement is like coming across a secret garden in a forest, while the 3rd movement has a Teutonic breadth which justifies the comparison with Brahms. The 3rd Concerto, written in the twilight of his days, is lyrical from beginning to end. The three works eminently testify to Medtner's development as a composer.

Often the piano sonatas have accompanying titles, although the actual programme is never revealed: Sonata Ballade, Sonata Minacciosa etc. The sonatas are nearly all far too long, extended one-movement forms, deriving from Liszt's Sonata in B minor, which could have benefited from some discreet pruning. It did not seem to worry Medtner in which language his songs were sung, although there is an obvious advantage to the singer who knows Russian and German. English translations are rarely satisfactory, unless the translator has some poetic gift himself. Two of the most powerful of them were written in Russia in the desperate days following the revolution: *Sleepless* (Tutchev) and *Arion* (Pushkin). Medtner, when sending these to Rachmaninoff, already in America, wrote, "Now you know what we have been going through". Although Medtner had played the violin as a boy, and his brother Alexander was a gifted violinist and orchestra-leader in Moscow, the violin sonatas and pieces are not amongst his more interesting works. They suffer from the disadvantage of being too long; he even felt sorry for the violinist who had to study them. A string quartet was sketched when he was a young man, and the Piano Quintet begun in 1906 was completed in 1949, his last major work. Like most Medtner, it seldom appears on concert programmes.

For its full appreciation, Medtner's music requires an experienced listener, one who does not merely look for superficial or surface reactions in music. It is the product of a searching mind, with philosophic implications which can only be recognised by those whose approach is similarly thoughtful. May the centenary year bring much performance of his music. It is a challenge to performer and listener alike and both must face up to it if its meaning is to be made clear.

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## A Musical Marriage

### Durga Bhagvat

#### Introduction

The legend of the 'musical' marriage of the future Gandharva monarch, Naravahanadatta, (son of the famous Udayana, King of Vatsa, and the renowned beauty Vasavadatta) to the Gandharva maiden, Gandharvadatta, is both unique and entertaining.

The legend is found in the *Brihat Katha-Shloka-Samgraha* by Budhasvamin of Kashmir. The only published edition of the first seventeen chapters of the work, with notes and translation in French, was that of Felix Lacôte. It was published in Paris in 1908. Lacôte has also written an analysis of the same work and compared it to other important versions of the *Brihat Katha* by Gunadhya. The work, *Essai sur Gunadhya et la Brihat Katha* (Paris, 1908), is an exhaustive study of 335 pages. The legend of Naravahanadatta and Gandharvadatta is given in the main in the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth chapters of the *Brihat Katha-Shloka-Samgraha*.

Before presenting the legend it would be appropriate to consider very briefly certain important data about the *Brihat Katha* of Gunadhya, and its versions, inclusive of the work of Budhasvamin.

The original *Brihat Katha* of Gunadhya was reckoned by eminent literary figures in medieval India to be as important as the great epics, the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana*. Gunadhya thus occupied the revered position accorded to Vyasa and Valmiki. He was at the court of King Satavahana of Pratishthana and is supposed to have lived either in the second or the third century of the Christian era. Gunadhya's work was written in the Paishachi language, a variety of Prakrit, considered to be spoken by barbarians and goblins. The original *Brihat Katha* is lost. The most renowned and the largest Sanskrit version of the work is the *Katha-Sarit-Sagara* by Somadeva of Kashmir, a court poet who lived in the eleventh century. Another Kashmiri version of the same period is the *Brihat Katha-Manjari* by Kshemendra, a noted poet. The latter work, however, is in a more abridged form and at times obscure as well. It lacks the literary beauty of the *Katha-Sarit-Sagara*, *The Ocean of Story*, as it is known to the world, after C. H. Tawney's translation of the work. Later the translation was elaborated and annotated copiously by N. M. Penzer in ten volumes and since then the famous book is almost always reckoned as Penzer's *Ocean of Story*. *Brihat Katha-Manjari* has been only partially translated into English and is hence less well-known. A Jain Prakrit version recently published by the Oriental Institute at Ahmedabad is the *Vasudeva-Hindi* (*The Wanderings of Vasudeva*). An old Tamil version, only partially available, is the *Udayana-Kadai* (*The Story of Udayana*). It is earlier than the versions mentioned above and is said to belong to the sixth century.

The *Brihat Katha-Shloka-Samgraha* belongs to the twelfth century though Lacôte considers it to be two centuries earlier. It contains twenty-eight chapters and is incomplete. Lacôte tells us, by comparing various episodes in the *Katha-Sarit-Sagara* and the *Brihat Katha-Shloka-Samgraha*, that the legend of Naravahanadatta has not been incorporated in the *Katha-Sarit-Sagara*. It is not to be found in the other versions mentioned above. Hence the uniqueness of the legend.

#### The Legend

Naravahanadatta was the only son of King Udayana of Vatsa. In his boyhood, Udayana was presented with the Ghoshavati, a marvel of a vina. He was a talented vina player, who could entice even animals by his entralling performance. His son was also equally gifted. Music was his greatest joy. When Naravahanadatta was proclaimed Yuvaraja by his father, astrologers declared that the prince would at some time in the future become the king of the Vidyadharas. Naravahanadatta married two Vidyadhara maidens, Madanamajuka and Vegavati. Vegavati's brother, Manasavega, kidnapped Madanamajuka. When his sister married Naravahanadatta (who he knew would one day be the king of the Vidyadharas, a position to which he himself aspired), he kidnapped Naravahanadatta. Vegavati, however, knew every sort of magic and battled with her brother, who then flung Naravahanadatta towards the sky. The prince fell down in a well and was rescued by the Vidyadhara, Amitagati.

Naravahanadatta first travelled in the air, carried by Amitagati. They passed through a dense forest and then Amitagati placed him in a large garden where there was a temple. Several tame birds and monkeys lived in the garden. On a seat of stone he saw a man, who resembled an immortal. He was handsome and noble, and totally absorbed in playing on the vina. The whole temple resounded to the music of the instrument. It held all the birds and monkeys spell-bound. The prince approached him, spoke to him with courtesy, and asked after his well-being. He then added, "Where did you practise and perfect this art?" The person to whom the question was addressed was completely absorbed in playing the vina and took no notice of the prince, who caught the end of the vina and shook it. At this point the musician shifted his gaze from the vina to the prince. Then he rose in such embarrassment that his upper garment fell. With joy and affection he made the prince sit on the same stone seat and pressed his feet. He guessed that the prince was tired after walking a long distance. Then he himself washed the feet of the guest and treated him with due courtesy. The prince asked the vina player which country and place it was.

The man said, "You are a divine being who can fly across the sky and how is it you are not aware of these obvious facts which any ordinary mortal knows?"

The prince, disguising his identity, replied, "I am a Brahmin from the Vatsa country and my parents live there. Since I was not happy with my wives, I worshipped a Yakshini. She was pleased with me and we lived together in the hills and forests. One night I felt that I had had enough of her company. I felt I should get rid of her. The Yakshini was so enraged that she dropped me here in front of you".

The man then replied to the prince's query, "This country is Anga and the big city is Champa. My name is Dattaka and I am a merchant. But since I love to play the vina I am known as Vinadattaka."

Then he called a servant and asked for a vehicle. When it arrived, he took the guest to his house in the city. During the drive the prince noticed that everyone in the city was engrossed in playing the vina. The farmer had left tilling the fields and was sitting under the shade of the plough, playing the vina. The cowherd sat beneath the shade of a tree and played shrill notes on the vina. In the market stood a number of carts loaded with parts of the vina, all of which were for sale. The vendors sat on the streets with piles of lotuses before them and they were producing such shrill notes from the vina that the sound hurt the ears of the prince. A customer wanted to purchase saffron, but his mind was so engrossed in the vina that he asked the trader to give him a vina instead of saffron. The merchant was so vexed that he shouted at the customer, "Are all the other merchants dead? Why are you eating me up?" So in the town even the lowly-born, like carpenters, blacksmiths, potters and basket-makers, were absorbed in playing the vina.

After his arrival at Vinadattaka's house, the prince was asked what he would like to eat. He remembered that he had told the host that he was a Brahmin. To keep up this pretence he said he would like to eat a rice and milk preparation with plenty of sweet in it. He said this because he knew that Brahmins were known to be fond of ghee, butter and honey. While the prince was massaged by a servant, he inadvertently blurted out that he liked wine. When the rice and milk preparation was served by the cook the prince was unable to drink it. He set it aside, explaining to his host that it was too hot, that it scalded his tongue. The cook and the host guessed that the stranger was not a Brahmin. Later on he was given meat with wine which he relished. The host thought that since he was the lover of a Yakshini, he had developed a taste for these foods in her company.

After the meal was over, the prince asked Vinadattaka, "How is it that there is such a passion for vina-playing in the city of Champa?"

Vinadattaka said, "In this city the chief of the merchants is Sanudasa. He has a daughter whose name is Gandharvadatta. Her beauty is matchless. She has received many offers of marriage from great and virtuous men. But the merchant is not willing to give her in marriage to any of them. This is the bride-price: Gandharvadatta sings a particular song wonderfully. A suitor who is able to play the same song on the vina after she herself has sung it, and can satisfy her and the assembled company will alone win her hand. Every six months this musical contest takes place before a large gathering. Till now sixty-four suitors have tried to meet the challenge but all have failed. No one can emulate her."

Soon there was a message from Sanudasa, the father of Gandharvadatta. A musical contest was to take place on the following day.

The prince then asked the merchant to describe Gandharvadatta and the seventeenth chapter of the *Brihat Katha-Shloka-Samgraha* describes the prince listening to Vinadattaka praise Gandharvadatta's talent and beauty.

As a result, the prince set his heart on winning her. He asked the merchant if it was at all possible for him to see her. The merchant replied, "That is impossible. No one except a musician can see her. Not even a god. If you want to meet her, first learn music".

Naravahanadatta pretended ignorance of music and said, "To be called a musician it is not enough to learn just a fragment of the musical art (of playing the vina) as propounded by Narada. Help me to procure that asset".

Vinadattaka arranged for a music teacher, a poor man named Bhutika. He was to be the prince's instructor (*vinacharya*) in the art of vina-playing. The teacher's voice was harsh and he had no knowledge of either the *shruti*-s or *svara*-s. He was as ugly as a monkey.

Seeing the teacher, Naravahanadatta said to himself. "Enough of that musical art propounded by Narada. Enough of Gandharvadatta. Even gaining a kingdom is not worth it if one had to be the disciple of such a worthless tutor. Vinadattaka and others have bowed down before him. But I cannot even bear to look at him".

Bhutika sat on the seat offered to him by Vinadattaka and looked disdainfully at the prince. Vinadattaka then said to the tutor. "Teach the Narada-art to this spouse of a Yakshini".

Bhutika replied to him in an arrogant tone, "He is discourteous to me and does not have the money to pay my fees. Knowledge can be gained either by serving the preceptor or by paying him large sums of money".

Vinadattaka said, "Preceptor, you speak ill and what you say is not true. The spouse of a Yakshini cannot be poor. I am his servant and you know that even I am prepared to pay you a hundred gold coins".

After accepting the money, Bhutika worshipped the goddess Sarasvati along with her attendants, among them Narada, and gave the prince a vina whose wires were badly tuned.

Naravahanadatta deliberately placed the vina on his lap in the wrong position and Bhutika exploded with anger. "This spouse of a Yakshini is very dull and stupid. It is not possible for me to teach him a thing. He does not even know how to hold the vina. He has never even set his eyes on noted vina players".

Having roundly abused the prince, the teacher took back the vina from him and sounded the *nishada* on it, saying that it was the *shadja*.

This angered Naravahanadatta, who took the vina from him and battered it so fiercely that five or six wires broke and the vina could only produce harsh sounds.

The tutor then said to Vinadattaka, "Instead of selecting persons who know how to handle the vina, why are you so keen to impart the art of Narada to this particular one?"

Right then Naravahanadatta forgot that he was incognito. From the broken vina he produced melodies which were exceedingly sweet. Vina-



dattaka and the others stared at him in amazement, "What is this? How wonderful it sounds!" they started exclaiming. But Bhutika, who was crest-fallen, said, "This is just a matter of chance." He left with the fees he had collected.

At night Naravahanadatta retired to his room which had a splendid bed. When he reclined on the bed, two beautiful courtesans, bedecked with jewels, came in, began pressing his feet and tried to win him over with endearing words. The prince, used to the soft speech of Vegavati, was annoyed by these coarse women and did not respond to their amorous overtures. They left. It was midnight. Suddenly he saw Vinadattaka's vina, wrapped in an embroidered cover and hanging from a peg. By now he was unable to sleep. He rose and took the vina on his lap. He started to arrange the wires properly and began moving his fingers softly on the instrument. He knew that the next day he was to go with Vinadattaka to the contest and thought it best to set the wires right. But as soon as he touched the instrument, music poured forth from it, music such as people had never heard before. All the neighbours got up and they went to wake up the rest of the city. They said that Sarasvati herself was playing the vina in Vinadattaka's house. Gradually the whole town gathered at the threshold of Vinadattaka's house. Naravahanadatta soon became aware of what was happening. He covered the vina and placed it on the peg as before. He returned to his bed, wrapped himself in a sheet and went to sleep. The people who had gathered round the house were disappointed and walked away.

In the morning all the arrangements were made to carry people in various types of vehicles to the venue of the concert. Naravahanadatta preferred to walk the distance. While he was walking on the road women-folk rushed out to have a look at this spouse of a Yakshini. They admired his looks and the men were jealous of him.

Sanudasa received Vinadattaka. He was regarded as a suitable bridegroom for Gandharvadatta by everybody. The pandal was full of men and women. People remarked that it was sad that Sanudasa had fixed a 'musical' bride-price. If he had made beauty the price, the spouse of a Yakshini would surely have won it. Naravahanadatta calmly listened to all these remarks and said nothing.

Soon all the people present were properly seated in a very large and sumptuously decorated hall. The curtain from the platform was withdrawn and Sanudasa welcomed the gathering. "If all you music-lovers are ready, I can send for Gandharvadatta".

Now all the contestants became nervous and started looking at each other hesitatingly. They eagerly awaited Gandharvadatta's arrival.

Another curtain was lifted and there before them was Gandharvadatta, fair like the crescent moon, lovely like a white lotus.

Then the *kanchuki*, the chamberlain, made an announcement, "Listen to me, everybody. Here is Gandharvadatta. The vina is also ready. He, who is capable of playing it, should come forward. So far no one has

succeeded and this is not at all gratifying to us. So venture forth and play it".

Then the citizens implored Vinadattaka to play since he was the seniormost and the best player in the city. He rose and took up the vina. Then Gandharvadatta started singing. At that very moment it struck Naravahanadatta that he had heard the melody before. He said to himself "I know the song. The efforts of all these people are useless. Now I remember. Long long ago Lord Vishnu, in the dwarf-form Vamana, sought to overpower Bali. He crossed the firmament in three strides. Vishvasu, the Gandharva, along with his attendants, saw him. Thrice they circumambulated Vamana. While he took the three strides, he sang the song, *Narayana-stuti* (*Praise of Narayana*) which he had composed himself. It was a marvellous song. Narada learnt it from him. Indra, the enemy of Vritra, received it from Narada. Arjuna learnt it from Narada and Uttara, the daughter of King Virata, learnt it from Arjuna. Parikshit learnt it from his mother, Uttara, and taught it to his son Janamejaya. The song was thus traditionally handed down and my father Udayana learnt it. I learnt it from him. Obviously he who does not know it is not likely to succeed. I know it and am assured of victory".

While Naravahanadatta was pondering thus, Vinadattaka, unable to cope with the task, left the seat. He looked utterly embarrassed and the whole congregation was dispirited and weary. Then with full assurance, Naravahanadatta rose from his seat. Vinadattaka warned him to keep away from the seat of danger. Naravahanadatta asked him, "But don't you know the proverb that a woman who is walking on the street has no need of a veil".

The prince, emboldened by his knowledge of the song, threw away every pretence. He was so confident that he commanded Gandharvadatta to begin. He left his seat and Vinadattaka and the others were amazed at his daring. But they remained silent.

The prince was offered a seat by the side of Gandharvadatta. The chamberlain handed him a vina. Naravahanadatta had one look at it and said, "Bring me another; our sort do not even touch this". He could see that the 'belly' of the instrument was full of cobwebs and so the wires had become heavy. The audience approved of the bold stand of this stranger from the Vatsa country. Another vina was brought and then another and yet another. While they were busy bringing the new vina, Naravahanadatta had time to have a good look at Gandharvadatta. But he did not give her any undue importance. Each vina, when it was uncovered by him, proved to have layers of thick cobwebs on it. The prince remarked loudly for everyone to hear, "God alone knows what the truth is!"

Gandharvadatta was now obviously nervous. She started trembling and her body was drenched in perspiration. Naravahanadatta rejected another vina because he found hair in it. Then Sanudasa himself brought a vina which was worshipped by fragrant flowers. Its base was of the shape of a tortoise. Sanudasa circumambulated the prince and with trepidation handed it over, almost as though he was giving Gandharvadatta herself

to him. Naravahanadatta washed his feet and circumambulated the vina. Then he took the vina on his lap and gently touched it with his fingertips. The wires were fixed in proper places, all the notes, among them the *Dhaivata*, emerged with ease. He played the *Gandhara* with so thrilling a touch that everybody was moved. Then he turned to Gandharvadatta, "Sing, you coward".

Though an expert herself, the girl heard the *Gandhara* note and was subdued. She was mute through fear and bashfulness. Then to revive her spirit he sang the divine song very, very softly. Thus he directed her and she started singing. It appeared as though Sarasvatī herself had appeared to purify the world. Her performance was superb. As she sang he reproduced each and every note on the vina, exactly as it was sung. The audience remained spellbound both by the song and its reproduction on the vina. After some time the *kanchuki* asked the audience whether the vina player had accompanied the song perfectly. The audience gave its verdict that the youth had indeed paid the bride-price and the girl should be married to him. So Naravahanadatta was immediately married to her.

The eighteenth chapter gives an account of the early life of Gandharvadatta. She was the daughter of the sage Bharadvāja and the nymph Suprabha. Indra was jealous of Bharadvāja and sent the nymph to break his vow of celibacy. She accordingly enticed Bharadvāja and a girl was born. She often visited her father. Once Sanudasa, who was shipwrecked, came to the sage's hermitage. The girl had just arrived there. Bharadvāja told Sanudasa, "Henceforth this girl will be your daughter. Take her with you". Sanudasa returned happily to Champa, his home-town.

#### *Vasudeva-Hindi*<sup>1</sup>

*Vasudeva-Hindi*, the Jain Prakrit work, by Sanghadasa Gani, is supposed to have been written in the interval of one hundred years following Budhasvamin's work<sup>2</sup>. There is a dispute about the date of the work and Dr. Aldorf claims it to be the oldest version of *Brihat Katha*, probably belonging to 600 A.D. Dr. Jacobi considers it to be as early as 300 A.D. The close resemblance between the *Brihat Katha-Shloka-Samgraha* and *Vasudeva-Hindi* has been acknowledged by Lacôte and others.

The story of Gandharvadatta, and the musical contest prior to marriage occur in the *Vasudeva-Hindi* as well. The hero is Vasudeva instead of Naravahanadatta. Sanudasa's role is played by Charudatta, the merchant chief of Champa.

Vasudeva was loved by two Yakshis and while fighting for him they dropped him down. He arrived at the temple of Arhanto Vesupulja. When he emerged from the temple and started walking the streets of the town, he noticed young people, some with relatives, all carrying vinas in their hands. Some were selling vinas from carts, which were surrounded by many people.

Vasudeva stayed with a music teacher called Sugriva. He told the teacher that he was a Brahmin called Khandia from Magadha. He asked the teacher, "Why are people here so devoted to the trade in vinas?"

Sugriva told him about Gandharvadatta, the daughter of Charudatta. She was proficient in music and her father said he would give her in marriage only to a suitor who could accompany her singing perfectly on the vina. The contest was held every month. When Vasudeva had worshipped the Gandharva Tumberu and Narayana, Sugriva gave him a vina and a pick (*chandanakona*).

Sugriva was also abusive and misdirected his pupil as to the song Gandharvadatta sang. The song she sang was *Narayana-giyaka* (The Song of Narayana).

Vasudeva attended the concert and while the others were not inspired to accept the challenge, he came forward to play the vina. He also rejected three vinas: the first because it had hair on it; the second because it was made from burnt wood in the forest and would produce harsh sounds; the third because it was made from wood submerged in water and hence would not produce deep notes. He accepted the fourth one which was smeared with sandal-paste and had flowers on it. This vina had seven wires attached to it (*saptatantri*). He accompanied Gandharvadatta, singing the song as well as playing it on the vina and ultimately won her.

#### Conclusion

After examining the two versions of the story, Budhasvamin's version appears more detailed and it has a real dramatic fervour. It gives us the succession of *Narayana-stuti*, which the latter version does not contain. This musical tradition is important in the Vishnu cult.

Another unique feature of the story in both the versions is that the *Svayamvara* of the girl is based on a musical contest. We know from earlier works, like the *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana*, that Draupadi was won by Arjuna because of his skill in archery and Rama won Sita by breaking the bow of Shiva. The *Svayamvara* tradition demanded manly valour in most cases. But in the story of Gandharvadatta musical ability alone is the test.

Another important piece of information about Champa is that in that town men from all strata of society had a passion for playing on the vina and the city was a centre of vina trade. The Anga country is modern Bhagalpur and old Champa is marked by two villages—Champanagar and Champapuri—which still exist near Bhagalpur.

Narada's name is associated with Indian music traditions. He is supposed to be the founder of scientific music. Tumberu, the Gandharva musician, is often referred to in the Puranas, along with Narada. He is also mentioned in the Jatakas. Vishvasu's name occurs in a special context in the *Brihat Katha-Shloka-Samgraha*. The Gandharvas were experts in music and all traditions support the fact. Hence music was known as the Gandharva-Veda.

#### References

- <sup>1</sup> *Vasudeva-Hindi*. Translated and edited by Dr. Nagin J. Shah, L. D. Institute of Indology, Ahmedabad, 1977.
- <sup>2</sup> *Mahakevi Somadevabhattacharya's virechita Kathasaritsagara (Pratham Khande)*. Bihar Rashtrabhasa Parishad, Patna, 1974. Translated by Pandit Kedarnatha Sharma Saraswat. Introduction by Dr. Vasudeva Sharma Agrawal, pp. 7-13.

## News and Notes

*Punch and Judy Show by Percy Press Jr., Bombay, September 12-13, 1979.*

The National Centre for the Performing Arts, in association with the British Council Division, presented a Punch and Judy show in its mini auditorium on September 12, 1979. Percy Press Jr. is the son of Percy Press, 'England's uncrowned king of the Punch and Judy showmen'. He made a brief halt in Bombay on his way back to England from Tokyo where he attended the celebrations accompanying the completion of 50 years of the Union of International Marionettes.

Percy Press Jr. is following an age-old tradition which is reputed to have originated in the Commedia dell' arte, and whose stock character, Pulcinello, was later adopted by different countries of Europe. He became Punch in England, Polichinelle in France, Petrushka in Russia, Kasper in Germany, Karagoz in Turkey, Aragoz in Egypt. In England, the Punch and Judy show has a history of three hundred years, its birth being reckoned from May 9, 1662 when Samuel Pepys in his *Diary* made mention of a show he witnessed in Covent Garden.

Percy Press Jr. usually employs a theatre which is really a miniature structure. It is a body theatre strapped on with a harness web. It can stay in one place or it can be mobile and he can perambulate among the spectators.

The most impressive part of the show on Wednesday was the skill with which Percy Press Jr. involved the audience, both adults and children alike, as participants in the performance. The children were sitting keyed up to watch the performance. The story line included the traditional ingredients. Punch calls out to his wife Judy to tell her that the baby is yelling and that he is furious with the noise. He threatens to throw it out and the children call out to Judy, expecting her to come and intervene. Judy tries to remonstrate with Punch, who belabours her with his slapstick. The Law Officer, who comes to arrest Punch, is also beaten. The Clown enters and there is an interlude, much loved by children, where the Clown, a Coloured Man and Punch are involved in the frying of sausages. The children shout, pointing to the individual who has run away with the sausages. There is also a brief interlude with a Crocodile, which has been substituted for the traditional Devil. Finally a gallows is set up and instead of Punch, it is the Hangman who gets his head in the noose. Normally the show includes the dog Toby, but Percy Press uses a live dog, his own terrier who is friendly and docile and has learnt to make the right responses.

No two shows are alike. The bare story line is the same but admits of a lot of improvisation, depending on the audiences. Where non-English



speaking children form the bulk of the spectators (as at the Chhabildas School, Dadar), Percy Press Jr. depends for effect on a lot of visual byplay, plenty of action, and a game with two chutes, containing marbles, where children compete to get the marbles at the bottom first and the winner gets a prize. Thus though the episodes are based on tradition, there is always room for improvisation and experiment.

Some Punch and Judy showmen have introduced new elements in their presentation. Their shows have suggestions for Road Safety etc., but Percy Press sticks to the traditional story line. His father has the Devil as a character in his show, but Percy Press Jr. prefers the Crocodile instead. The puppets are all of wood and fabricated by an old craftsman who specializes in making them.

On the whole, the doings of Punch do border on the cruel. But the element of fantasy is indicated through the typical sound of the 'swazzle'.

This small instrument consists of two slightly curved pieces of silver with a piece of linen between the metal. Placed in the tongue and pressed up to the roof of the mouth, it produces the slightly unreal Punch call. The dialogue of the puppets is then repeated in a normal voice by the puppeteer. This acts as a mediating force, taking away from the cruelty of the violent doings of Punch. The 'slapstick' (the word itself is derived from the Punch and Judy show) makes a lot of noise but doesn't do any real damage!

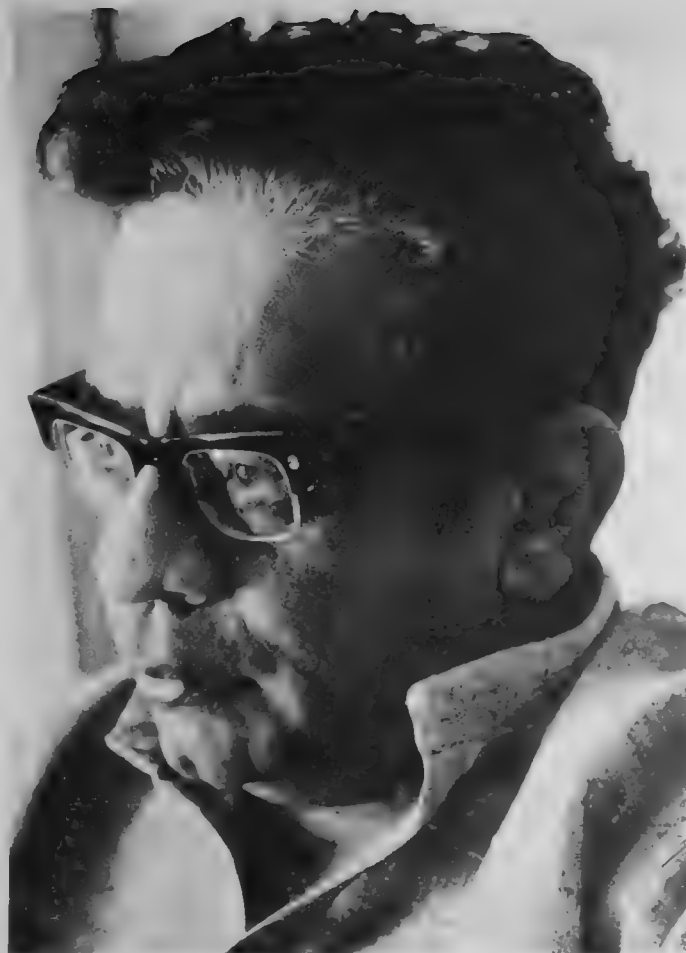
Percy Press Jr. performs every week of the year on Saturdays. He also assists his father during the latter's shows. The ideal audience, he says, is about 100 children but it is possible (on the lines of the show in Tokyo) to perform before 600 spectators with the help of mikes, spot-lights, etc.

Percy Press Jr. plans to go to Washington next summer for the World Puppet Festival where the Smithsonian Institution will videotape the performances. He is confident that the tradition will be continued, for he has plans for a small Punch and Judy Theatre in the Craft Market now situated in Covent Garden. The fifty-odd Punch and Judy showmen in England can perform there regularly; children and tourists will be able to watch the show for a nominal fee; and the show will be held at the exact location where Samuel Pepys saw it more than three hundred years ago.

#### P. L. Deshpande at 60

November 8, 1979 was P. L. Deshpande's sixtieth birthday. P. L. is a household name in Maharashtra. His plays, particularly *Tuze Ahe Tuze Pashi*, his one-man performances, specially *Batatyachi Chal* (where he stands on the stage alone, his voice, his gestures, the expression on his face bringing to life the whole atmosphere of an old tenement) have endeared him to playgoers of varied tastes, of different ages. Though his eyes and his comments, readers of his travelogues have made the acquaintance of Europe, of America, of the East, *Vange Chitre* introduced to them the Bengal that P. L. loves. His writings (and most of all his character sketches in *Vyakti ani Valli*) are the product of a keen and observant eye, a sharp ear for the nuance of speech, and a genuine interest in people. Everything that P. L. has said and written expresses a warm-hearted concern for the predicaments of the humble and a satirical thrust against the pretensions of the arrogant and pompous. It is this impulse which sparks off his humour and wins a response from every section of society.

P. L.'s gifts have found recognition in the Sahitya Akademi Award conferred on him in 1965, the Sangeet Akademi Award which he received in 1967. He was elected President of the Golden Jubilee Session of the Marathi



Sahitya Sammelan; he was Vice-President of the Sangeet Natak Akademi. He is a member of the Council of the National Centre for the Performing Arts. The Rabindra Bharati University in Calcutta has recently conferred an Honorary D. Litt. on him and the Municipal Corporation of Bombay will honour him this year.

But recognition, honours and monetary rewards are for P. L. only some of the many paths of reaching out to people. His earnings, placed in



trust by his wife Sunita in the P. L. Deshpande Foundation, have been distributed among a Blood Bank, a Hospital Wing, a *Muktangana* in Pune. His generosity has prompted him to contribute to various causes, the Anandvan, a centre for the rehabilitation of lepers, to the Lokmanya Tilak Mandir at Vile Parle, where he spent his childhood and youth. But more important than financial help is the manner in which P. L. has placed his time, his energy and name at the service of democratic ideals. His role, during the last elections, in defence of the individual's right to free expression and against the forces of oppression is proof of his awareness of the artiste's debt to the society in which he has grown.

For many P. L. is known as a musician, to others as a dramatist, actor, director. Some remember the films he made when he was relatively young. Thousands feel close to him through the rich humour of his books. But for all of us his is the warm, genial spirit which has lightened life's burdens.

## Obituaries

*Dr. Lalmani Mishra*

Dr. Lalmani Mishra, who died on July 17, 1979 was Professor of the Music and Fine Arts Department of the Hindu University, Varanasi. Known for his deep knowledge of Indian musical instruments, he was the author of *Bharatiya Sangeet Vadya*, an authoritative work on this subject.

*Acharya Kailasha Chandra Deo Brihaspati*

Acharya Kailasha Chandra Deo Brihaspati, who died on July 30, 1979, was an authority on Braj Bhasha, Sanskrit and *Dharma Shastra*. His main contribution was in the field of music. His works include *Bharatka Sangita Siddhanta*, *Sangita Chintamani*, *Mussalman aur Bharatiya Sangita and Dhrupada aur uska Vikas*. He was for several years Chief Producer, Hindustani Music, AIR. The Akhila Bharatiya Gandharva Mahavidyalaya conferred on him the title of *Sangita Mahamahopadhyaya*. He was also elected Fellow of the Sangita Natak Akademi.

## Book Reviews

**DHRUPADA: A STUDY OF ITS ORIGIN, HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT, STRUCTURE AND PRESENT STATE** by Indurama Srivastava, Drukkerij Elinkwijk B. V., Utrecht, 1977, Not Priced (In English).

If *raga* is the brick with which the architecture of classical music is built, forms such as *khyal* and *dhrupad* constitute its layout. The *ragalakshana*-s, elements that characterise the total and melodic scheme of a *raga* that (scale); *arohi*: *avarohi* (ascending and descending order of notes); *vadi:samvadi* (the principle note and the note, second in importance); the *chalana* (typical movement) and the like — present the *raga* in a seed form, giving us a latent nuclear structure potentially capable of expansion and elaboration. They provide us, so to say, with *raga* in the abstract; a conceptual scheme consisting of select tones arrayed in a definite pattern, moving in a distinct manner to produce a certain intended effect, the *ragabhava* or individual mood of a *raga*.

Theoretically we can imagine any number of ways in which the abstract *raga* scheme may be actualised. Indeed, even in practice we do identify *raga*-s in the different manifest garbs of *natyapada*, *ghazal*, *bhajan*, *dhun* or film songs. But it is only in the spacious, well-phased architectonic structure of a *dhrupad* or *khyal*, or less importantly, *thumri*, that a Hindu-stani *raga* really comes into its own. These *raga* lay-outs, as they may be called, have a tradition and history as long and continuous as the idea of the *raga* itself. To understand Indian musical culture it is as important to study these in depth as to study the notion of *raga*.

But though a good deal of attention has lately been devoted to the history of *raga* and the norms governing it, *dhrupad* and *khyal* have not aroused a like interest. It is heartening, thus, to see a study of *dhrupad* published from Utrecht, prepared under the guidance of two stalwarts, Prof. J. Gonda and Dr. (Mrs.) E. te Nijenhuis. This monograph, submitted as a thesis for Doctor in Letters to the Rijksuniversiteit, Utrecht, by Smt. Indurama Srivastava, aims at tracing the history of *dhrupad* to its earlier source in *prabandha*, and to analyse its structure. There was a time in recent musical history when audiences, by and large, failed to be stimulated by the grand, imposing and comparatively stark design of the *dhrupad* style. Taste is now rapidly changing and *dhrupad* is regaining the response it deserves. An attempt to study *dhrupad* should, therefore, evoke general curiosity as well as the special interest of musicologists.

It is well-known that *khyal* owes much to *dhrupad*, one of its main sources. This relation is still a matter of living experience, transparent enough to any reflective listener. But the roots of *dhrupad* are not so apparent to the eye, or rather, the ear, and can be discovered only through textual research. Musicologists have known for long that the *dhrupad* was born of the older *prabandha*, a form already on its way to extinction in the fourteenth century, when Sudhakalasa in his *Sangitopanishadsaroddhara*

reported that *prabandha* composers were becoming quite rare ('*prabandha-bandhakartaro virala bhutale' dhuna*', Ch. I, verse 37).

But *prabandha* itself was a large and multifaceted genre, antedating the *Brihaddeshi* of the seventh century, which delineates it as a fully grown, well-entrenched form prevalent all over the country. Indurama Srivastava arrestingly argues (in the second chapter of her work) that *dhruvād* grew out of the *ektali prabandha*, the last in the *salaga suda* class of *prabandha*-s. This class represents a later development in the genre since the early twelfth century work *Manasollasa* does not speak of them. *Salaga suda*-s are mentioned for the first time in the late twelfth century work, the *Sangita-samayasara* by Parshvadeva, and then in the *Sangita Ratnakara* of the early thirteenth century.

This leaves us with a problem. If *salaga suda*-s emerged after *Manasollasa* of the early twelfth century, what made them so popular by the end of the century that Parshvadeva thought it fit to include them in his manual? Indurama Srivastava does not seem to have pondered over this problem, or she might have been led to ask some searching questions concerning her data. She might not have been led straightaway to the conclusion that the *suda salaga prabandha* did not exist before the closing years of the twelfth century on *Manasollasa*'s negative testimony alone. The *Manasollasa* is a kind of encyclopaedia, dealing with all manner of sundry subjects in which its author was interested. Music is only one of these. Though undoubtedly valuable, and in some ways unique, the treatment of music in *Manasollasa* is, at the same time, incidental. One should consequently be cautious in attaching too much weight to what the *Manasollasa* does not record, especially because the survey of *prabandha*-s in this work is not meant to be exhaustive: the author expressly says that he intends to record, with examples, only such *prabandha*-s as are not generally known (Verse 199, *Vimshati* 4, *Adhyaya* 16).

The author further argues that it was only with *salaga suda* that vernacular was partially introduced into *prabandha* singing. Here again, the *Manasollasa* is detrimental to the thesis. It records songs, the texts of which are in the contemporary vernaculars (*deshibhasha*). The examples quoted leave no doubt that the language used was living speech (Verses 330, 340, *Vimshati* 4, *Adhyaya* 16; also verse 6 of the alternative reading recorded on page 42 of the Gaekwad edition).

The text-and-tala regulated portion of the *dhruvād* (the *nibaddha bhaga*) today has four structurally phased out parts: *sthai*, *antara*, *sanchari* and *abhog*. The author convincingly argues that earlier there were only three parts, namely *udgraha*, *antara* and *abhog* (p. 30).

Chapter Three deals with the language employed in *dhruvād* and Chapter Four with the sung texts. Many *dhruvād*-s are beautiful both as poetry as well as music. The author's prose translations give us an idea of the variety of poetic themes. The poetry itself has eluded her, but she was not really aiming to capture it.

Chapter Six deals with the musical structure of *dhruvād* compositions, and is followed by samples in *sa ri ga* notations (in Roman script).

Indurama Srivastava's discussion of the terms used for the different parts of the *dhruvād* structure as well as the *bani*-s, the now extinct different styles of *dhruvād* singing, is interesting and historically informative. She also provides us with brief structural analyses of the *dhruvād* compositions she has notated. Yet one feels that her study could have acquired greater value had she also pondered more probingly over questions such as: what are the different aesthetic functions of discrete compositional parts like *sthai*, *antara* and the other two? What is the logic behind their need in the whole? How are they related to *alapa*?

Another important query that might have fruitfully occupied her is pertinent to most forms of Indian music: what is the relation between the fixed, pre-composed portion and the improvised patterns? Improvisation certainly does not have the same character in all forms: there are profound differences. Were it not so, the overwhelming judgement that *dhruvād* is a closed form with no room for further creative development, while *khyal* is not, could make no sense. After all, both share the creative use of improvisation as an inherent trait: in what sense then is *dhruvād* a closed form but *khyal* open to creative change?

In truth, no discussion of *dhruvād* can be complete without a good analysis of what distinguishes it from *khyal*. We cannot really know the one without understanding the other because of the important reason that *dhruvād* is set off against *khyal*: it is carefully controlled and insulated against inroads from other formal approaches and styles of melodic development, especially those of *khyal*. Therefore that which makes *dhruvād* different from *khyal* is as essential an element of its character as its more internal features.

The *dhruvād bani*-s are no longer extant, but there still are great enough differences between prevalent schools of *dhruvād* singing. A deeper exploration in this direction could also have proved fruitful and further enriched the study.

Yet, on the whole, the monograph is interest-arousing, and one hopes that it will provoke further studies in *dhruvād* and like forms.

MUKUND LATH

# RAVANA CHHAYA

RAVANA CHHAYA by Jivan Pani, Sangeet Natak Akademi, N. Delhi, 1978, Rs. 12.00 (*In English*).

*Ravana Chhaya* is a 35-page booklet on the shadow puppets of Orissa, written by Jivan Pani of the Central Sangeet Natak Akademi. Twenty years ago I had the opportunity to witness a *Ravana Chhaya* performance in Orissa. But it seemed so primitive that I did not even make a mention of this style in my books on Indian Puppetry. But after reading this book I realize that this was an omission on my part and now I am keen to see it again, perhaps from a different angle. I had, at that time, just started taking an interest in the art of puppetry but, somehow or the other, shadow puppets did not receive as much of my attention as other styles did.

Jivan Pani is to be congratulated for bringing this rare form to light through *Ravana Chhaya*. Because of his strong interest in documentation, he has touched on almost all the subtle aspects of the form, right from its history to its presentation techniques. The most important part of this book is the text of the *Ravana Chhaya* play which writers, particularly on different forms of puppetry, generally ignore. There are several styles of shadow puppets in India and every style has its own special techniques. The most developed of these is, perhaps, the *Tholu Bomalatta* of Andhra, where the puppets are multi-joined and multi-coloured. Their *Ramayana* show, unlike that of *Ravana Chhaya*, is not based on the Jain *Ramayana* in which Ravana is given extraordinary status. The text of this *Ramayana*, as presented in the book under review, reveals many unknown facets of the epic. Those engaged in the study and production of shadow puppets will find this text interesting as well as useful. More than ten pages have been devoted to this aspect of the form. At first glance this seemed to me somewhat unnecessary and over-emphasized, but after another reading of the book, I began to appreciate the importance of this emphasis. It will certainly help those who are working in the field.

The *Ramayana* of the Bharatiya Lok Kala Mandal, when it was presented in Indonesia and other South-East Asian countries, received a somewhat mixed reaction because of its Valmiki-based text. But when we witnessed the Indonesian Puppet *Ramayana* we could see that the text was more or less the same as the one included in Jivan Pani's book. This takes us back by several centuries, when *Ravana Chhaya* might have been taken to these countries by our Buddhist and Jain rulers.

I wonder how the unjointed, flat puppets of *Ravana Chhaya*, (having no movements other than jiggling, tilting and moving close to and away from the projection curtain) can be as impressive as Jivan Pani makes them out to be. The Karnatak shadow puppets *Tholu Gombatta* and the Andhra *Tholu Bomalatta* puppets are fascinating and effective only because of their jointed limbs, multi-coloured projection and their capacity to sustain the interest of the audience for nights together. Today the *Ravana Chhaya*, on account of all its limitations, may not stand competition with other shadow forms of India, both traditional and modern. As suggested by the writer himself, it deserves patronage by the State as well as other Academies not only for its survival but for bringing it in line with other forms.

The book is an excellent example of detailed documentation work, touching on all the subtle points required for research workers. It also gives us an insight into the manner in which static and unjointed puppets can be made as lively and full of sensibility as the *Ravana Chhaya* puppets are. Those connected with the art of puppets should study and watch a *Ravana Chhaya* show to learn how such primitive and elementary-looking puppets can be made so effective and spectacular. The art is a challenge to those who try unnecessarily to make their puppets realistic, multi-jointed and over-sophisticated.

DEVI LAL SAMAR

UBHAYABHISARIKA, Love in Spring, by Amiya Rao and B. G. Rao. Foreword by C. Sivaramamurti, Printox, New Delhi, 1979, Rs. 75.00 (Sanskrit text and English rendering).

Vararuchi's *Ubhayabhisarika* is a rare type of Sanskrit one-act play, called *bhāna*, in which a single actor (a man about town) walks, as it were, through the streets of a busy town and courtesans' quarters conversing with, imitating and ridiculing various characters who themselves do not appear on the stage. This is effectively done through the theatrical device of *akasha-bhashita* (Speaking to the Sky) which involves the actor in talking to characters unseen and unheard by the audience and repeating to the audience what they are supposed to have said.

The best of the preserved *bhāna*-s belong to the fifth-sixth centuries A.D. The *Ubhayabhisarika* was one of the four interesting *bhāna*-s edited and published under the title *Chaturbhani*, first in 1922 by Kavi and Sastri, and later in 1960 with Hindi translation and cultural background by Motichandra and V. S. Agrawal. The *bhāna*-s are important works which demand serious attention not only for their literary and theatrical form but also for the light they shed on the contemporaneous urban culture and values as well as for the data they provide on the visual and performing arts.

The work under review presents the Sanskrit text of the *Ubhayabhisarika* and its English rendering. The purpose of Amiya Rao and B. G. Rao is not to prepare a critical edition of the text as is the case in G. H. Schokker's work on another *bhāna*, viz. the *Padataditaka*, or in J. R. A. Loman's edition of the *Padmaprabhrtaka*. Their aim is not to present a scholarly study but to make available to the general public an English translation in modern diction. One would agree with C. Sivaramamurti when he says in his Foreword to the work: "I cannot but confess that reading through this has been an enjoyment like going through the original itself." However, one may point out that the rendering of the word "*Sangitakam*" as "Opera" is west-oriented. The comparison of the ancient Indian leisured men with "the fashionable Bloomsbury set" seems a bit far-fetched.

The translators' attempt to recreate the atmosphere of the *bhāna* through photographs and line-drawings is not backed by adequate and appropriate selection. The photograph of the Yaksha-Dvarapala of the Pitalkhora cave on the jacket as well as facing page 5, which reads "enter the rake", is inconsistent with the theme. Similarly, the photograph of the Sanchi *sala-bhanjika* or the woman-and-tree fertility symbol cannot be used to represent a *ganika*. The publisher has wasted half of the pages of the book in a lavish lay-out making this interesting playlet (*bhāna*) beyond the reach of the large public.

DEVANGANA DESAI

MASS COMMUNICATION AND JOURNALISM IN INDIA by D. S. Mehta, Allied Publishers Pvt. Ltd., N. Delhi, 1979, Rs. 60.00 (*In English*).

D. S. Mehta has written a useful but also a rather curious book. It is useful because it contains an enormous amount of factual information on the mass media from the press, radio and TV to news agencies, film censorship guidelines, advertising, and house and trade journals. The print medium gets a more generous share of attention than the others and here D. S. Mehta includes some very relevant material on press laws, the press and the courts, the Press Council, old and new, and the 1978 UNESCO declaration on mass media whose adoption provoked such universal controversy a year ago.

For the most part, the book is designed to serve as a manual for practitioners in any area of mass communications. There are chapters on "Feature and Feature Writing", "Interview for News and Features", "Oral Press Briefing", "Opinion Pieces", and even one on "Getting Features into Newspaper Columns". As a guide, D. S. Mehta is on much more slippery ground than when he is unloading hard information. For instance, I would, to put it mildly, hesitate to recommend, as he so confidently does, the following: "...a lead such as 'Everyone loves dogs' is a bald statement. Instead, one can state, 'Because we love Dogs, the industry with a turnover of 15 million flourishes'."

D. S. Mehta's book is curious because it has a curious perspective. The author's own experience has been predominantly in official information and public relations posts. This, inevitably, colours his view of his subject. He sees the media, especially the press, not so much in terms of how efficiently and objectively they can and should do their job as in terms of how they and those working in them can be manipulated by the hypothetical "publicist" for whom the book is written.

Thus, he can, in a deadpan manner, suggest how the "publicist can make clever use of the letters to the editor column...A more effective way (than writing a letter himself)...is to get the letters written by private individuals expressing the point of view which the publicist would like to project". But D. S. Mehta cautions, "Care has to be taken...that it is not overdone".

Again, he urges the "publicist" to "suggest...occasionally subjects for editorials. He can also indicate the line or approach to a particular problem".

A third instance: "Though it is difficult to influence the cartoons in the newspapers but (sic) there is no harm in suggesting appropriate themes to the cartoonist...once in a while".

What is wrong about this is not merely that D. S. Mehta seems to see no conflict between supporting a free press and listing various ways, including some devious ones, of undermining it. What is worse is that such an attitude to the media as his book incorporates cannot but make the "publicist" at whom it is aimed look at a fundamental tenet of an open system in a purely utilitarian and calculating, if not even a cynical, way.

A. S. ABRAHAM

Ashesh Bandopadhyaya Plays Esraj. Tabla: Ustad Keramatullah Khan. Side One: *Raga Jaunpuri; Alap and Gat in Tritala*. Side Two: *Raga Bihag; Alap and Gat in Tritala; Dhun Kaharwa*. HMV SEMGE 11012 (stereo).

Week-end Pleasure. Nirmala Devi sings light classical melodies. Side One: *Sawan Ka Nazara Hai (Pahadi); Main Ne Lakhon Ke Bol Sahe (Thumri); Yehi Thaiyan Motia Herae Gaili Rama (Chaiti)*. Side Two: *Prem Na Jane Rasiya (Thumri Sohni); Na Maro Pichkari (Holi Kafi)*. Tabla: Nizamuddin Khan. Harmonium: Taj Ahmed Khan. HMV ECSD 2810 (stereo).

Enchanting Sitar: Ustad Abdul Halim Jaffer Khan. Side One: *Raga Aarabi; Alap; Gat: Tritala*. Side Two: *Raga Multani; Alap; Gat: Tritala*. Tabla: Ustad Nizamuddin Khan. HMV ECSD 2809 (stereo).

Munawar Ali Khan: Punjabi Songs. Side One: *Pahadi*. Side Two: *Kafi. Saren-gee; Mohammad Sagiruddin Khan*. Tabla: *Wajid Hussain*. Harmonium: *Asad Ali*. HMV ECSD 2584 (stereo).

Come Alive in a Live Concert with Chitra Singh and Jagjit Singh. Ghazals and Punjabi Geets. HMV ECSD 2819/2820 (stereo).

Ashesh Bandopadhyaya's record is a refreshing surprise. The Esraj is a somewhat colourless instrument but, in the hands of this artiste, it comes alive. His rendering of *raga-s* Jaunpuri and Bihag, with the master accompaniment of Keramatullah Khan, is charming. The artiste belongs to the great Bishnupur *gharana* of nineteenth century Bengal and gives us a beautiful glimpse of this tradition, with his very pure and imaginative delineation of the two *raga-s*.

Nirmala Devi sings in too high-pitched a voice and dwells far too much on the upper ranges of the octave to make the record pleasing. The notes falter off and on and the strain on the voice is obvious.

Abdul Halim Jaffer Khan's "classical pieces" stray too much into the *dhun* territory to satisfy a serious listener. That is why despite his deft and easy handling of the sitar, the disc evokes only an indifferent response.

Punjab, like most other states in India, has a rich heritage of music with local colour and flavour. As part of the preservation of this tradition, Munawar Ali Khan's record of five Punjabi songs is interesting. They are, however, somewhat repetitive and even Munawar Ali's rich open voice fails to hold attention. Mention must be made of Sagiruddin Khan's soulful sarangi accompaniment — a treat throughout.



Chitra and Jagjit Singh are popular artistes — a measure of their popularity can be seen in the two-record 'live concert' album. Popularity, unfortunately, does not ensure quality. One does not know where to place these songs for they neither have the lilt of film music nor the aesthetics of a well-rendered *ghazal*. Jagjit Singh's voice is his great asset — an asset definitely not shared by his partner. Her attempts at crooning are mostly out of pitch, and specially noticeable in the duets where her thin and unsteady voice contrasts so unfavourably with his. Neither pays any attention to the rules of poetry in *ghazal*-s: where to break a line for the purpose of improvisation or which sounds to elongate for variation.

*Ghazal* singing is a discipline by itself. It involves an understanding of poetry and command over music. There is not much evidence of either in this album.

SATYENDRA TRIVEDI

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